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The Silver Sport's Double;



OR,

GOLD DECK'S COLORADO DEAL.

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"THE RACE-COURSE DETECTIVE," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

COLD DECK'S DOUBLE.

The "game" was in full blast at the Big Strike saloon, in Black Hawk, Colorado. It was a day off for the men who labored

THE SILVER SPORT FLASHED OUT A PISTOL AS HE LOOKED INTO THE FACE
OF HIS DOUBLE.

in the gulches and mountain sides seven days a week, as a rule, and the gold dust that was so hard to find was being passed to the small, keen-eyed, pale-faced faro dealer, in exchange for "chips," with the prodigality characteristic of men who get wealth in large quantities or not at all.

There were six or eight men besides the dealer, and they kept their eyes on his nimble fingers as he turned out the cards from the box and gave them a winning or a losing, with a wolfish glare that told of their fiercely wrought passions that gambling etiquette compelled them to keep in check.

"Gimme a stack o' blues!"

The voice was that of a stranger, who had entered the saloon without being noticed, and who now stood at the bar, with a glass of seltzer water in his hand, looking calmly over the assembly.

The dealer glanced carelessly over his shoulders as he shoveled out the blue ivory chips, and took the gold coin which the stranger threw over to him.

The new-comer was a middle-sized man of about thirty. His features were clear-cut, and his well-curved mouth was shaded by a long black mustache, with a wavy curl at each end. His dark gray eyes flashed as if to prove that his mind was thoroughly alert, and the firm grip of his lithe fingers, with their carefully trimmed nails, suggested that the revolver whose butt was visible under his dark sack coat, sticking in the gayly-ornamented black leather belt, would be as easily handled as the glass, if need were. Upon his dark brown, curly hair a new silk hat was perched jauntily, and his whole appearance was that of one who had some easier way of making a good living than by laboriously digging for gold and silver in the hillsides, like most of the men in this saloon who were stealthily regarding him.

He ran his blue chips from one hand to the other with a dexterous movement that made the ivory pieces look like a long blue streak in the air; then, picking up his glass of seltzer in his hand, raised it to his lips.

Bang!

Before he could swallow the liquid the glass was shattered into a thousand fragments, and the seltzer had splashed over his black tie, in the middle of which gleamed a precious blue-white diamond.

Calmly he turned toward the table, until he was squarely facing a big, raw-boned fellow, with a broad-brimmed hat slouched over his deep-set eyes, almost down to the long drooping mustache that was twitching convulsively as its owner enjoyed an inward chuckle.

The man was leaning his left elbow on the table, and in his right hand there was a heavy six-shooter, still smoking.

"Beg yer pardon, stranger, but it's ag'in' the rules of this hyar town ter drink seltzer 'ithout whisky. I wuz on'y givin' yer a p'int on etiquette."

The stranger did not answer, but slowly moved toward the big man, like a cat that approaches a mouse without letting its victim know it.

"Yer want ter look out, Dan," whispered a slim man with one eye, at the big man's elbow. "Thar's goin' ter be a discussion, I'm thinkin'."

The stranger came so slowly toward Dan that there was plenty of time for this remark and a few others before he had covered the short distance between the bar and the table.

The game had stopped, for all realized that this controversy was more interesting even than faro.

Suddenly the well-dressed stranger had Dan Whitton by the throat, as his revolver went off, and sent its bullet into the rough pine ceiling; then there were half a dozen thumps, as Dan's head hit the table again and again.

The stranger held Dan's head flat on the table with one hand, while he wrenched the revolver out of his grasp with the other, and fired the remaining four shots into the ceiling. This done, he gave the helpless fellow's head two more bangs on the table.

With a howl of fury Dan Whitton

sprung to his feet and rushed at the now smiling stranger, but only to receive a stinging slap in the face from the other's open hand that effectively knocked him back into his seat.

Seven or eight hands itched to close on the butts of revolvers, but the love of fair play, which is a conspicuous characteristic of men in Western mining towns, restrained them, as they saw the stranger stroll up to the bar, without paying any particular attention to the men around the table, and without making any movement toward drawing the revolver in plain view in his black leather belt.

The bartender had wisely dropped under the counter at the first sign of hostilities—had, in fact, been half-way down when Den Whitton's bullet shivered the stranger's glass.

"Another glass of seltzer," commanded the well-dressed man, as he playfully threw one of his blue chips at the bartender's ear, which was just visible as he crouched behind the bar.

The easy good humor of the stranger made him friends with the rough men around the table, while Dan Whitton sulkily picking up his pistol, replaced the empty cartridges with full ones, but well understanding that he would have no sympathy if he were to renew his attack upon the smiling man at the bar.

The bartender was a young fellow who had not long been away from Chicago, and, although he was said to have left that city on account of having held up a boozy man on Randolph Street, he had not become used to the crack of heavy Colt's revolvers yet.

He put out the seltzer, as requested, but kept his small eyes, which were too close together for beauty, and were almost without lashes, shifting about to see that there was no more fighting while he was in range.

The stranger, taking his glass in hand, held it up, so that if Dan Whitton or any one else had desired to send a shot at it, it afforded an excellent mark. But, although the game had stopped, and every one was looking at him, not a man showed the least desire to prevent his drinking anything he pleased.

"Put out the whisky, Reddy!" ordered the stranger, quietly, to the bartender.

The young man from Chicago started nervously as he heard his nickname used so confidently by a person he had never before seen, and whom no one in Black Hawk knew; but he placed two bottles of whisky on the counter and looked inquiringly at the calm stranger, who still held his glass of seltzer aloft.

"Drinks for the crowd, of course!" murmured the unknown, in his pleasant, almost womanly voice. Then, turning to the table, he added: "Gentlemen, you will please drink with me, and you will drink whisky. Dan Whitton, step up here! And you, Cy," to the one-eyed man, "and Tom Hawkins, Will Bunton, Killer Newton, and the rest of you. All come up here."

It was ludicrous to see how each man started as his name was called by the imperturbable new-comer, who had dropped from the clouds, as it were, and knew everything about the people of Black Hawk.

All strolled up to the bar, however, leaving their chips on the table—all except the dealer, to whom the stranger ordered his drink to be taken, although there was no danger of any attempt to rob him in a place where every man carried a pistol, and would have been ready to use it immediately on any one who would so seriously transgress mining gamblers' honor or usage.

Dan Whitton could not take his eyes off the unknown's face, but swallowed his liquor in a sort of daze. The ceremony did not take a minute, and as soon as the glasses were emptied, the men went back to the table, having seen the stranger drink his seltzer with a gusto which indicated his preference for that kind of liquor to the ordinary tipple at Black Hawk.

Whitton had at last turned his back on the stranger, when he was rudely drawn back by a hand on his shoulder that

seemed to have the firmness of a steel clamp.

"Dan, stay here!"

The rest of the people dropped into their game again, for it must be a tremendous interest that can stop a faro game in a mining town very long, and the bartender was washing up his glasses. No one was observing the two men who had been brought together in so peculiar a manner, and who were now looking into each other's eyes, with entirely different expressions on each face.

The stranger's eyes sparkled with amusement, while those of Dan glared in terror, surprise and repressed anger, as, still with his white hand on Dan's shoulder, the unknown shoved him to a bench near the door and sat down beside him.

"What's this hyar game you air givin' me?" demanded Dan, as he was forced into the seat. "Do yer want me fer anything?"

"If I hadn't wanted you, Dan, I should have killed you when you drew your gun to shoot that glass out of my hand."

The calmness with which this was said was terribly suggestive in its matter-of-fact directness, but Dan Whitton knew it was the dead-sure truth.

"Go on!" was all he said, although his hand moved mechanically toward his belt.

"If you don't keep your hand away from your gun, Dan, I'll slap your face with my open hand again," remarked the other, with a contemptuous smile that galled Dan Whitton to the quick. "Now, to business."

He leaned over and whispered something in Whitton's ear.

It was only a few words, but it made Dan turn almost blue under the sun-brown that covered his face, and he stared at the stranger as if he were a supernatural creature.

"Ther-ther-sign?" gasped Dan, looking cautiously around him. "Hev' yer ther sign?"

For answer the stranger unbuttoned his white shirt-cuff, as he rolled up the sleeve of his coat, revealing to Whitton a triangle, with a figure "5" in the center, pricked into his arm with India ink.

"Ye—yes!" stammered Dan. "Thet thar's all right, so fur. But—thar's something else."

Without answering, the stranger thrust one of his long, white fingers inside his own collar and brought up a thin chain of silver, attached to which was a small piece of a gold coin, bearing strange characters on one side, and a face on the other. Dan, seizing this coin, from some mysterious part of his own dress, produced another piece, just like it. He put the two together, and found that they fitted exactly on one side.

"Satisfied?" asked the stranger, as he replaced his bit of coin.

"The grip?"

The two men joined hands, and there was a serpentine-like twisting of their fingers, which evidently was satisfactory to Dan Whitton, for he nodded his head two or three times, as he looked with admiration at his companion.

"Gentlemen, my friend Dan Whitton will cash in his chips and show me the hospitality of his shanty to-night. I tell you this to assure you that there are no hard feelings between us."

The men around the table laughed at this pompous proclamation by the unknown, which they understood at once was an invitation to take another drink, and it was hardly necessary for the bartender to put the bottles and glasses out to draw them to the bar.

As before, the stranger took seltzer. Holding up his glass he said, in his pleasantest tones: "Gentlemen, I know you, and you have the right to know me. I am—"

"Dick Cole, of 'Frisco, commonly known as 'Cold Deck,'" put in a voice so much like that of the man at the bar that it seemed to be ventriloquism, as another person, his exact counterpart—face, hat, clothes, white hands and all—stepped up to the bar, and coolly poured himself a glass of seltzer.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLOOD-RED TRIANGLE.

As like as two peas!

For a moment everybody stood aghast. This second new-comer now standing nonchalantly at the bar, his glass of seltzer in hand, smiled in an amused way at the consternation he certainly had created. Then, with a nod to his double, he threw the seltzer down his throat, and, apparently almost with the same movement, flashed out his pistol and covered the face of his double, whom he had named Dick Cole, before Dick could raise either of the revolvers he had drawn, but which were, perforce, held with their muzzles pointing to the floor.

Cold Deck saw that the other had the drop on him, and, without a word, thrust his two pistols back into his belt and smiled back at the new arrival.

"It's all right, boys," he said, good-humoredly. "This is my particular friend, Silver Joe, the Silver Sport. He has made a big pile by pretending to be me at different times, although I think I'm better-looking than he is in every way."

As he uttered these words, in a careless, off-hand manner, he turned suddenly, and, with a scarcely perceptible sign to Whitton, stepped out of the doorway into the street.

Dan stood hesitatingly by the door for an instant, while the second comer, who had been called Silver Joe, by Dick Cole, was looking at his pistols, and wiping the silver mountings with a delicate white linen handkerchief, and apparently thinking of nothing else.

At the faro table the game was going on amid the wrapt attention of the players, as if they had never thought of anything else.

It was getting dusk, and the bartender lighted four lamps in different parts of the room, with tin reflectors behind them, besides one hanging lamp, with jingling prisms, suspended over the faro table.

The Big Strike Saloon was the best lighted place in the camp; even the hardware and grocery store was not equal to it, while the house of the mine superintendent at the head of the street, where were carpets on the floors, and a piano in the parlor, positively were gloomy compared with the saloon, except when Miss Cora was at the camp, when she had the place illuminated from top to bottom.

Something to this effect remarked the slim man who had been called "Cy," an abbreviation of "Cyclops," which a classically educated Englishman who had spent a few months at Black Hawk once, when under a cloud in the old country, had christened the slim man on account of his one eye. The name had stuck to him.

"Who is Miss Cora?" asked Silver Joe, casually.

"The daughter of Mr. Leonard, the superintendent. She is at school at Denver most o' the year, but she's comin' home 'bout this time, I hear."

The bartender was evidently disposed to talk about the girl, but suddenly lost his auditor. While Reddy had been talking, Dan Whitton had slyly disappeared through the doorway into the street, but had not time to close the door softly after him, when Silver Joe was at his heels in the street.

Dan was so much occupied in looking for Dick Cole, the Cold Deck Sport, who he knew must be waiting somewhere for him, that he did not look behind, and Silver Joe hid himself in the shadow of the doorway with the skill of one who knew every trick of the detective game.

As is always in the West, there had been no twilight; as soon as it became dusk, it was dark. No lights lit up the darkness save the feeble glimmers from dirty windows here and there, and the broad gleam that came from the Big Strike Saloon, so Silver Joe was able to keep himself out of sight, while Whitton walked up the sloping street, and, in another minute, encountered Dick Cole, who stepped out of a doorway to intercept him.

"Where is that fellow?" was the inquiry.

"He's all right. I gave him the slip easily enough," answered Dan.

"Did you?" muttered Silver Joe, to himself, with a smile, as he stood so close to the others that he could almost have touched them, but was entirely out of sight in the dense darkness.

"Good!" responded Cold Deck. "Now, Dan, I must get this thing fixed up at once, because I want to go back to Frisco. I don't care to stay in the same State with that fellow. Where are the other three? Can you put your hands on them, right away?"

"Cert! Thar's Leonard, up at the house, hyar, an' Waga is up in his cabin."

"That makes four," put in Cold Deck, quietly. "Where's the fifth? We cannot get into the deposit until we have the whole five to make up the red triangle, you know."

"Don't you worry, boss! Dan Whitton ain't ther man to go inter er thing with blinkers on. I kin find the fifth when we want it."

"We want it to-night," averred Cole, with more asperity than he was accustomed to display.

"Don't get mad, 'cause ef yer do, I'm er coyote ef I don't let yer work this hyar thing out all by yer lonesome."

Cold Deck's slim fingers grasped Dan Whitton's shoulder with a grip of steel, and shook the fellow backward and forward, almost literally making his teeth chatter in his head.

"Do you want another lesson?" he hissed.

Dan did not answer, but allowed himself to be shaken until Cole got tired of it. Then Dan muttered:

"Yer kin do what yer like; shoot me, ef yer like. I ain't keering much. I hev' no family, an' ef we git inter ther cave, I dunno what I'll do with my share uv ther stuff, anyhow."

Cold Deck, familiar with Whitton's kind of men, wisely let him alone, and merely directed him to "March on!"

He knew this: If he wanted to find this secret treasure house, which was known to exist somewhere in the mountains, and of which he had one-fifth of the key, he must let this rough miner have his own way.

Fifteen years ago, several coaches had been robbed near Denver by five freebooters, who had finally buried all the money and jewelry captured in the neighborhood of Black Hawk, in a cave of which one of them knew. This cave was secured by first fastening the well-fitted stone that covered the hole with a padlock, and this padlock had five keys. Then they covered it carefully with earth, and piled boulders over and on the earth, so that it was impossible to distinguish it from any other part of the canyon.

Then followed this arrangement: One of the five was left at the spot, pocket compass in hand, while the others rode away so far out of sight and hearing as to give him time to walk two hundred yards in any direction he pleased, guiding himself with the compass, and keeping careful note of his course, that he might go straight back to the spot if it were necessary. This done, the man was to mark, on one fifth of a Mexican moidore which had been cut into pieces and distributed among the five, the direction in which he had walked.

Then the first man rode away, after showing the second man the spot to which he had walked. The second man went in another direction, marking it on his piece of coin, and he was followed in turn by the third, fourth and fifth.

By this arrangement it was impossible for any one of the five to know where the cave actually was situated. The only way to find it was for the possessors of the five pieces of coin to go all together to the neighborhood and work the problem out backward. The spot at which the last man had finished his two hundred yards was marked, and was shown to each of the other four by him.

To find this big cache was the object of Cold Deck's visit to Black Hawk.

What Silver Joe was there for will develop as this narrative opens out.

The gang which had robbed the coaches had become widely separated, and for fifteen years fully \$1,000,000 in coin and a quarter of that sum in jewelry, the proceeds of their rich "hauls," had lain untouched and unclaimed, waiting for some one with the key to the secret chamber to bring the treasure to light.

All this was known to Dan Whitton and Cold Deck, but they did not stop to tell each other the story, although it has been necessary to tell it to the reader, that he may understand what follows.

Dan Whitton sniffed with triumph as he loafed up the rather steep street, and stopped at last in front of a large house, of stone and frame, that had pretensions to architectural beauty not often seen in that immediate region. A wide veranda encompassed three sides of the residence, while at the back was a complicated system of iron ladders that could be raised, when desired, giving access to a cave cut in the face of the perpendicular cliff at the back, some two hundred feet above the ground.

It had been supposed that Leonard, the mine manager, kept his valuables up there, as being a place of perfect safety, but that idea had been exploded by Wago, the drunken Indian, who had managed to climb up there one night, by some means known only to himself, and had found nothing in the cave but some crocks of butter, a case of draughtsman's instruments, and some surveying paraphernalia. Not a sign of money, or even of documents or books to indicate that the cave was used as a safe.

Waga reported this to his accomplice, whoever he may have been, and no one had curiosity enough to climb into Walter Leonard's cave afterward.

The residence was quite dark, as the two men stopped before it, and Whitton whispered:

"It's all right. Wait a minute."

He whistled softly, and kept his eye on an upper window. Suddenly the black window glowed in the center with the form of a blood-red triangle, in the center of which was the figure "5," like the design on Cold Deck's arm.

Whitton made a sound like a catbird, at which the triangle disappeared. Then, as he and Cold Deck stepped cautiously up the steps to the veranda in the pitchy darkness, a door opened before them silently, letting a draught of warm air come forth, and they passed into the house of Walter Leonard, superintendent of the Big Strike silver mines.

The door was not closed immediately—not too soon to prevent another man going in—a man who would have been very unwelcome had they known he was there—Silver Joe, of the Boulevard.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPORT MAKES HIS VENTURE.

The three men found themselves in a black hall when the door was closed, and in deadly silence.

Then, at some distance, a faint glimmer of light could be discerned, that gradually resolved itself into the mysterious red triangle, with the figure "5."

As the three men looked at it, it gradually rose from the place in which it first appeared, near the ground, and, as it went higher, also receded. It stopped when it was about ten feet above the floor, and then Dan Whitton uttered the single word, "Waga."

The light and the triangle vanished, and Dan, taking Cold Deck's hand in his, led him swiftly along in the darkness, until the two stumbled over the bottom step of the flight of stairs at the end of the long hall that led to the upper floors.

So far not a sign of life had they found in this awful house except in the opening and closing of the front door, and the appearance of the fiery triangle.

As they reached the stairway the fiery triangle suddenly appeared again, almost over their heads, and, ere it disappeared, revealed the presence of a man of gigantic stature, who appeared to hold the glowing figure in his hand.

Whitton did not hesitate, but, with the confidence of a man who knew he was

on the right track, walked swiftly up the stairs in the darkness, with Cold Deck close at his heels. When they reached the place where they had seen the triangle they found a sharp turn of the stairs, which led them toward the front of the house again, but on the second story, along a hallway.

Dan evidently knew his way, for, though a chair and table stood in the hallway, he avoided a collision, and so guided his companion that there was no noise, although the furniture might actually have been put there as a trap.

Cold Deck had hardly time to note this familiarity of the miner and tough with the interior of his superintendent's residence, when there came a blinding glare of light at his elbow, and he was unceremoniously hauled through a doorway on the right into a room that was literally blazing with electricity. At the same time, it seemed to Cold Deck as if the great red triangle dominated everything else, forcing him to close his eyes for an instant.

When he opened them he found himself in pitch darkness again, but sitting in a softly cushioned reclining chair, and in an atmosphere in which the faint odor of roses told him that costly perfumes were among the luxuries enjoyed by Walter Leonard in his home.

Where was Joe Hamilton, the Silver Sport? Had he also got into the room?

When the door of the parlor opened, Joe was moving cautiously along the upper hallway, not far behind the others, and prepared for anything in the way of adventure.

"By the snakes! I just missed it that time!" he muttered, as the two men in front were dragged into the parlor, and the door quickly but noiselessly closed again. "There's that confounded table and chair, and I'd have plumped into them if they hadn't opened that door and given me a little light. I don't know exactly what I'm going to do, but I've got to do something. I'm not going to be shut out of my share of that wealth, and of course the scheme is to be worked out in that room."

Cautiously he moved around the table and chair, until he was close to the door of the room.

He moved his long, sensitive fingers over the door, and could almost tell the thickness of the wood by the amount of "give" when he pressed the panels, and noted every little inequality made by the varnish. A man who could tell by the feel whether a card was the ace of diamonds or the king of clubs was not likely to have any trouble in determining all he wanted to know about an ordinary wooden door, in the dark.

At last his patience was rewarded. He felt a crack running diagonally for about six inches in the middle of one of the panels, and as he pressed it, the yield assured him that it ran all through the wood. It was so slight, however, that not a glimmer of light could come through, and of course it was impossible to see into the room.

"I'll soon fix that," muttered the night-spy.

He drew from his pocket a thin knife in a sheath, and examined its edge and temper by drawing it across his thumb and bending it almost double, allowing it to spring back. He did this merely mechanically, for he knew that the blade was of the finest steel, and that it had a temper and edge such as few knives made anywhere can boast nowadays.

"Now for a hole to see. I'm sorry to cut up Mr. Leonard's door, but I can't stop to apologize now," was his unspoken remark, as he attacked the wood along the crack.

The delicate blade, manipulated by his skilled hand, very quickly and noiselessly made an opening through. In five minutes Joe had made a neat little orifice through which he could see into the room and hear anything that might be said.

He saw a magnificently furnished apartment, carpeted with the richest productions of the Turkish looms in the shape of rugs and squares of wonderfully-designed

carpets, of which the colors possessed that dazzling brightness so hard to attain in carpet-making.

There were priceless treasures in Dresden china, statuary that had been carved by the masters of the Paris art world, pictures worth a hundred times their weight in gold, and rare books in a bookcase along one side of the wall that Silver Joe recognized as editions that only millionaires could possess. An upright grand piano, inlaid with pearl and gilded lavishly, occupied a corner, and the piano lamp that stood by its side was of the latest design, and evidently of solid gold, as Joe, with the eye of an expert, could tell even at a glance.

Clusters of electric lights were disposed about the room, from brackets on the walls, and depending from a chandelier in the center of the ornamented ceiling, while on the wall immediately opposite Joe, at the door, and above the piano was a large square of what appeared to be plain ground glass, framed magnificently in gold, but entirely plain in itself. This one object was so different from anything else in the room, in that it was not apparently either ornamental or useful, that Silver Joe paid particular attention to it, and resolved to watch it as long as he could see into the room at all.

Sitting on the piano stool, and moving carelessly two and fro, was a man with great broad shoulders, a handsome, aristocratic face, and evidently great length of limb, although he was doubled up as he sat. He had a straight nose, deep-set dark eyes, and his brown beard, tinged with gray, was trimmed carefully to the pointed shape that is known as the "Vandyke," while his brown mustache, also showing considerable gray, was pointed at either end, and gave him a French aspect.

This was Walter Leonard, superintendent of the Big Strike silver mines at Black Hawk, and supposed to be one of the principal owners of the property.

At either side of the door were seated Dan Whitton and Dick Cole, Silver Joe's double, listening to a remark by Leonard:

"The clew must be run down to-night," he said, "if we are all here."

"Yer kin see fer yerself, Mister Leonard," answered Dan. "Hyar's ther missing fifth jist turned up," nodding toward Cold Deck.

"Of course you are sure he is right?"

Cold Deck thrust up his sleeve, showed the triangle and "5," and then, stepping across the room, gave Leonard the "grip."

The superintendent was satisfied, for he nodded gravely, and went on: "Here are three. Waga is four. Where is the fifth?"

"I hev' it," averred Dan, carelessly.

"Where?"

"That's my business."

"And mine," muttered Silver Joe, whose face was pressed closely to the door in his eagerness to hear everything. "It's all right, Dan Whitton. You've been playing a bold game, but Silver Joe is on your trail, and he'll run you down."

He looked around the room from his peephole, and saw that the three men were silently regarding each other, while the sneering smile on Cold Deck's face indicated that he was keeping something back for his own advantage.

The Silver Sport saw this smile, and he muttered: "I think, Mr. Cold Deck, that you are the man for me to watch first, after all."

"Now for the compact," suddenly observed Leonard, rising from his seat. "You both know the rules of the Order—that when there are three members present, they shall not go ahead without first doing the 'secret work' of the triangle. Let the new man look out in the hall, to make sure there are no eavesdroppers. It is not necessary, except that it is an important by-law of the Order."

"Whew!" whistled Silver Joe, under his breath, as he hastened to curl himself under the table, and placed his right hand on the butt of one of his six shooters.

Barely in time, for Cold Deck had the door open and was standing in the hall just as Silver Joe drew himself out of sight.

As Cold Deck left the room the lights went out in the room, it being one of the rules of the Order that when the outside guard was doing his duty of watching there should be no light in the apartment.

An inspiration flashed through the Silver Sport's brain, and he acted upon it on the instant. The light was out, and Cold Deck was standing in the hall against the table, on the side furthest from the open door.

Joe swiftly, but silently, slid out of his hiding place, in the black darkness, and, standing by the side of Cold Deck, suddenly seized him by the throat with one hand, and held him tightly around the waist with the other arm, as he hissed into his ear:

"Cold Deck, this is Silver Joe, and he means business. You know me! Get under here."

With resistless force he bent Cold Deck down, and shoved him under the table. Then he held him tightly, and whispered: "Cold Deck, you know me. I have put a capsule of nitro-glycerine on this table in such a way that the slightest jar will throw it down, and blow the whole house over the mountains. Lie still until I relieve you. You know what I can do with chemicals and explosives, and you know that I am not afraid to pass in my checks when my time comes."

Cold Deck could not have spoken if he'd wished to, for the fingers of Silver Joe were tight on his throat, but he nodded slightly, and the rival sport understood that he acquiesced, and that he could trust him.

Without another word he released Cold Deck's throat, and slipped quietly into the room and closed the door with the words: "All quiet!"

As he spoke the lights went up, Walter Leonard's hand being on the switch button, and Silver Joe was sitting calmly in the chair lately occupied by Cold Deck.

"Well, we are ready to proceed. Are you ready?" asked Walter Leonard, of Silver Joe, of course supposing him to be Cold Deck.

"Quite ready," returned Silver Joe, with a peculiar smile that did not escape the superintendent.

CHAPTER IV.

CORA LEONARD'S WARNING.

"The first thing to be done, now that we are prepared to go ahead, is to compare the coins," observed Leonard, his eye fixed on Silver Joe.

Somehow, Leonard apparently could not quite reconcile the appearance of the man who sat in the chair which Cold Deck had first occupied. Something so arrested his attention that he was on his guard, almost unconsciously to himself.

"I'll keep my eye on you, my sporting friend," muttered Leonard, below his breath, as he saw that the sport was closely regarding him, as if he could read his inmost thoughts.

In fact, Joe Hamilton was musing: "I wonder whether he has any idea of the trick. If I thought so, I would make a scrap of it right here and now."

The two men, Dan and the superintendent, did not hesitate about proceeding with the "secret work," however, but, fumbling in their pockets, brought out pieces of metal attached to a string made of steel wire entwined with an ordinary silk watch-guard. These were laid on the table, side by side. The pieces did not fit, because they happened not to be the two which matched.

"Where is yours?" demanded Leonard, looking toward the sport.

The Silver Sport hesitated a moment, but only for a moment, for he produced from the inside of his collar a piece of coin like the others, attached to a silver chain, the exact counterpart of Dick Cole's.

Silver Joe's bit of coin fitted exactly into that of the others, the three forming three-fifths of the whole disk.

"Good!" muttered Leonard. "Now—" But here he was interrupted by a clatter of hoofs on the street below, followed by a woman's voice shouting to a horse; then came a ring of an electric bell, long and loud, as if the person at the door was in an imperative mood.

"Cora!" cried Walter Leonard, with a flush of real joy in his face, which drove away the haughtiness as completely as if it had been wiped out with a great sponge.

Hastily the three men took back their pieces of coin, and Leonard hurried down the stairs to open the front door.

"What a fool er man kin be over er gal," growled Dan Whitton, as he walked about the room to inspect the curiosities with the manner of a man to whom they possessed the charm of novelty in an unusual degree—as no doubt they did.

It seemed as if Leonard hardly had time to get down-stairs before there was a bustle in the upper hallway, and a vision of feminine independence burst into the parlor, and looked with wide-open eyes at the two men.

"What's going on here, dad?" she asked of Leonard, who had followed her in. "Hello, Dan! How are things down at the mine?"

"Fairly good, miss," answered Dan, with an awkward bow, and blushing through the brown on his cheeks.

"Coming down to see you fellows as soon as it is daylight," added Cora. "Just come from Denver on my own responsibility. That stiff old academy, or college, or whatever they call it, makes me weary, and I have to get among the mountains to take a spin on Wilcat once in a while or I should expire. What do you think of that word 'expire,' dad? They make us say it at Denver. No one ever dies, or croaks, or passes in his checks, up at the college. But they expiah—exp-i-i-ah! Bah! It makes my feet ache."

Walter Leonard listened to every word uttered by the willful young lady, with an admiring smile that told how much he thought of her, and then said:

"Cora, don't you know this gentleman?"

Cora looked carelessly at Silver Joe, and remarked, coldly: "No. I never saw the gentleman before to my knowledge."

"It is Mr. Richard Cole, of San Francisco."

"What? The gambler they call Cold Deck, from his way of playing cards when he finds the luck going against him? Dad, you know I always speak my mind wherever I am. I don't like Cold Deck, and I don't want to number him among my acquaintances. I don't believe in gambling at all, but, Jiminy Christmas! If I were to play cards at all, I'd be square, if it took my pile!"

With which straightforward declaration Cora flounced out of the room, with her pretty blue riding habit clutched in her hand, and leaving the three men to think what they pleased about her.

"Golden hair, red cheeks, eighteen years of age, and as full of the devil as a girl can be!" thought the Silver Sport, as he followed her out of the room, "and she doesn't like Cold Deck. I don't blame her. Well, I hope she will think a little better of Silver Joe when she knows him under his own name. She little thinks that Joe Hamilton is working so hard for her interest, but she shall have her rights if I have to kill every rascal in Black Hawk—which would about depopulate the place, I am thinking."

"Does this stop the business?" asked Dan Whitton. "We ought to put this thing through without waste of time, because the risks are getting bigger every day. Do you have to stay at home for the sake of your gal?"

Before Leonard could answer, Cora's voice chimed in from outside the door: "No, he doesn't have to stay in for his gal. His gal can take care of herself. I suppose I can find Margaret downstairs, dad?"

"Yes, as deaf and obstinate as ever," was the reply.

"All right. I am going down to her,

as soon as I finish changing my dress. You go out, if you have to. That old mine is in some kind of trouble, I presume. It is always taking you out at night, when I'm at home. But say, dad!"

"Well?"

"Look out for Cold Deck! Don't trust him! I don't like his looks. I can see him from here, over the bannister."

Crash! Over went the table, and Cold Deck, who believed himself discovered, and forgot all about the supposed nitro-glycerine, sprang to his feet, and into the light of the parlor.

With a bound he was at Silver Joe's throat, and the two men struggled desperately, each trying to reach his pistol, but afraid to loosen his hold on the other's wrist, even for an instant.

An expression of intelligence swept across the face of Leonard, and it was clear to him at once why he did not exactly understand the face of Silver Joe. The superintendent threw himself upon the two men, and, seizing Silver Joe, pulled him backward as easily as if he had been a baby.

With a shriek and growl combined, like a maddened wild beast, Cold Deck drew his pistol and aimed point-blank at Silver Joe's forehead.

There was a loud report, but the bullet, instead of going through Joe's head, shivered one of the large incandescent lamps in the center of the room, and buried itself in the ceiling.

Cora Leonard stood between the two sports, looking defiantly from one to the other as she pressed her right wrist in her left hand and winced with pain.

She had struck up Cold Deck's revolver, and the heavy weapon had made a cruel bruise on her white flesh.

For one moment she stood regarding the group, while everybody seemed to feel that vulgar quarreling would be out of place in such a presence. Then Silver Joe, with a bound, reached the door and was flying down the stairs, as Cold Deck, with a yell of rage, followed and blazed away after him in the darkness of the lower hall.

"Whew!" remarked Joe Hamilton, as he reached the street and strolled quietly up the mountain to the very heart of the mining camp. "If there had been a glimmer of light, and I had not stooped very low while I got along that lower hallway, Cold Deck would have settled my hunt for the 'fiery triangle' treasure. Whatever is said about Cold Deck, it can't be denied that he is sure death on the shoot."

Silver Joe walked straight along until he reached a canyon, in which the pine trees grew thickly in patches on the side of the steep walls that towered above on the right, while the rocks that strewed the narrow pathway were so irregularly piled up here and there that it required a close knowledge of the place, and the utmost care to avoid being pitched headlong over the precipice to the valley, some two thousand feet below.

For at least a mile the Silver Sport made his way along the canyon, only stopping once to feel that his fragment of coin was safe under his shirt, and that his two pistols were properly supplied with cartridges.

It was pitch dark, but he stepped along with a confident stride, as if he knew just where he was. Suddenly he stopped and looked at the high wall on his right by the aid of a cigar lighter, which was operated by a chemical spark.

He held the little flame close to the bare rock, and so exact had been his calculation that he found he was within a few inches of the spot for which he was searching.

He put the cigar-lighter in his pocket, and then, digging his fingers into a fissure that he had noticed, he drew himself up, hand over hand, finding steps cut into the solid rock at intervals, that gave him an easy means of climbing.

A climb of about fifty feet brought him to a small ledge, where he rested for a few moments; then he went on again, finding steps as before, until he reached another ledge, immediately over the great

valley, so that a fall from the perch would have meant a drop of two thousand feet, in addition to the one hundred feet he had climbed above the narrow path in the canyon.

Silver Joe uttered a short, sharp whistle, following it with a mournful, long-drawn-out cry, like a wolf calling to its mates.

He listened for a minute; then came back an answering cry exactly like his own, followed by a voice immediately above him.

"Who wants the chief? Who calls Waga?"

"A brother from the triangle!" was answered, solemnly, although Joe was thinking that the ceremony partook a good deal of bucombe.

"You are welcome to sit in Waga's wigwam," responded the mysterious voice, and a rock, level with Silver Joe's face, swung aside, showing an opening in which glowed the red light of a fire, and brought into relief a very commonplace figure, in an old shirt and torn Jean trousers, but an unmistakable Indian, nevertheless.

It was Waga, once an Apache chief, but now a hanger-on at the Black Hawk mines, doing odd jobs occasionally for a little meal and meat, and as much fire-water as he could get.

CHAPTER V.

AN AWFUL PLUNGE.

Silver Joe drew himself up to the ledge and stood by the side of the Indian, noting at the same time that, although the red man stooped considerably, he was remarkably tall when he chose to draw himself up. He may have been forty years of age, and it was evident that his stooping was only a habit, and not the result of decrepitude.

The door, formed of the rock, was swung to, and Silver Joe and Waga looked at each other by the light of the fire in the center of the cabin, sending up a thin haze that escaped through a hole in the rocky ceiling.

"Waga, you know Cora Leonard?" Joe asked.

"Her father was good to my people, and the Golden Star shines in Waga's heart. Waga knows her."

"There's two or three miserable cusses trying to steal from the Golden Star the treasure left her by her father."

"Ugh!" grunted Waga.

"Those fellows will be here in a few minutes, and they'll try to get you into the scheme. What will you do?" asked the sport.

Waga's dark eyes glowed, and for a moment, as he drew himself up to his full height of over six feet, there was something in his appearance that suggested the nobleness romancers associate with the Indian character.

"Waga is faithful to Golden Star," he muttered, as he took a pipe from a corner and handed it to Silver Joe. Then he took another for himself, filled it with tobacco from a crock that he had pushed toward the Silver Sport, and, curling himself up on the floor, began to smoke, silently and calmly.

For perhaps half an hour the two sat there in the red light of the fire, pulling away at their pipes, and waiting!

Suddenly there was a noise outside—a scraping, as of people clambering over rocks, and a door opposite to that by which Silver Joe had entered was pushed open, and Dan Whitton appeared, with Walter Leonard and Cold Deck immediately behind him.

Like a flash the situation appeared to Silver Joe, and although his right hand twitched involuntarily in the natural impulse to pull a revolver, his quick perception assured him that such a movement would mean death, and he just went on smoking.

The superintendent closed the door and shot into place a big iron bolt that had been left unfastened, while Cold Deck, whose pistol, pointed straight at Silver Joe's head, had never been lowered since

he entered the cabin, smiled scornfully at his rival.

"It always happens so, some time, Joe, that the other fellow gets the drop, and then things are changed."

"Exactly, Cold Deck," answered Joe Hamilton, quietly, "and then again it sometimes happens that the tables are turned and things are where they were at first."

"Give me your guns!" hissed Cold Deck, fiercely, as if the other's words had riled him.

"Come and take them!" was Joe's quiet response.

He was pulling away at his pipe, while Waga and Walter Leonard watched the contest of will between the two sports, and were prepared to dodge bullets.

The struggle was brought to an end by Leonard, however, for, stepping behind Silver Joe, he suddenly pinioned his arms to his side, while Cold Deck, ready for such an act, sprang forward and whipped the two revolvers out of Joe's belt.

Waga's eyes flashed, but he did not interfere. His face remained apathetic, and he stooped over the fire, with the impassiveness of his race, waiting until it should be his turn to do something.

Leonard, who had the strength of a royal tiger, hustled Joe out of the door and along a narrow gorge until they were on the edge of the precipice by the side of the cabin. They found themselves standing on a ledge not more than two feet wide, along which Leonard, who still held the sport in such a way that he could not break loose without a tremendous struggle, pushed Silver Joe carefully ahead of him.

It was an awful situation for the two men, and a test of strength there must almost surely have hurled both down fully two thousand feet into the valley. The Silver Sport realized this, and made no resistance to the steady push of the superintendent.

Suddenly the superintendent stopped at a place where a bush grew on the side of the steep wall over their heads, on the left, and, thrusting the bush aside, disclosed the opening to a cave. In another moment Silver Joe was inside the place, with a handcuff fastened to his right wrist, and attached to a chain held to the rocky wall by a strong staple.

Joe did not say a word. He knew that he was helpless; and, considering his purpose in coming to Black Hawk, it behooved him to have infinite patience as well as pluck.

"I have one comfort; those rascals can never get the combination without me. I suppose they will take from me my one-fifth of the coin, but they can't get the secret that goes with it, do what they will."

Walter Leonard may have had an idea of what was passing in Silver Joe's mind, for he stopped at the entrance to the cave, and, looking back, said, with a malignant smile:

"You have got into the inner ring of the fiery triangle, somehow, but it will not be of any use to you. You will have to give up the secret, and then your life will depend upon yourself."

"Indeed?" smiled Joe, incredulously.

"Yes, indeed! Don't suppose that I don't know you, Joe Hamilton. You are a pretty good imitation of Dick Cole, but you didn't fool me, even at first. I suspected you when you were in my parlor, and I was just waiting for actual proof, to call you down."

"You must be satisfied now," remarked the sport, carelessly.

The calmness of this well-dressed, handsome fellow, who could not be overcome even when he was absolutely in the power of an enemy, made Leonard grind his teeth in rage.

"You cussed fool!" he hissed. "Do you think I am going to let you stop me when I have everything fixed? You will give up your end of the triangle, when I am ready to make you do it. Don't you fear?"

"I don't," answered the Silver Sport, still smiling.

Leonard rushed back and slapped Joe's

face with his open hand, leaving the marks of his five fingers in white ridges, that became red immediately afterward, forming a terrible background or frame for the blazing eyes that threatened a fierce revenge for the insult when Silver Joe should become free.

Then Leonard walked away, and found himself face to face with Waga, who stood near the entrance to the cave, looking in at Silver Joe.

"Waga is here," grunted the Indian.

"Well, I don't want you here," was the other's angry retort. "Git out, and attend to your own business."

"The Silver Chief is my friend," Waga replied, calmly, as he pointed to the cave.

"He is not your friend! He has tried to injure you and your people, and the poison of the snake is under his tongue. Waga will find that I speak the truth. Come!"

Waga hesitated a moment, and then, in obedience to Leonard's outstretched finger, stalked away toward his cabin, with Leonard at his heels.

As they moved, the ledge upon which they had been standing, just outside the cave, suddenly slipped away, and several tons of rock, almost literally dropped into the valley with a dull crash that echoed from the chasm, and made Leonard shiver as he realized what a narrow escape he and the Indian had had.

"Ugh!" grunted Waga. He was an Indian, and it was not for one of his race to express apprehension at anything.

As the rock fell from the front of the cave, making an indentation in the cave itself, the Silver Sport involuntarily tried to pull himself further into the cave, but was of course stopped by the handcuff and chain which held him to the wall.

"How am I ever going to get out of this?" he thought. "I would soon find out if I could only get my hand free."

Then, in spite of his courage, he could not help a sinking at heart, realizing how thoroughly helpless he was, and that he must starve to death unless help came to him. In his despair he would have thrown himself upon the floor of the cave, but he found that the devilish ingenuity of the persons who fixed the chain to the wall had made it so short that he was obliged to keep his hand up, and that he could not even sit with comfort, much less lie down.

It was perhaps as well that Silver Joe could not prostrate himself to brood over his dilemma, for it kept him up to the situation, and his brain worked diligently to find some way out of his trouble.

"The first thing to be done is to get out of this infernal handcuff," thought Joe. "If I had the tools of my trade here there would have been no trouble. But I did not want to appear in this part of the country as anything but a sport, and I left my handcuffs and everything belonging to them at Deadwood. Well, we never know what will happen when we start out."

As he muttered thus, he thrust his left hand into his pocket and pulled out a miscellaneous collection of articles, including cartridges for his revolver, silver money and several keys. Then a thrill of joy went through him, for he saw a small key among the others that he recognized as belonging to handcuffs.

In another instant the handcuff attached to the chain was dangling loosely from the wall. The Silver Sport was free to move about the cave, and to decide what he should do next.

"The question is, how am I to take part in the discovery of the treasure of the fiery triangle without allowing myself to become known," he muttered. "The first thing is to get out of here and reconnoiter, of course."

Without any doubt in his mind that he had clear sailing now, and that he would be able to hold his own against Walter Leonard, Dan Whitton and the others who were trying to get the treasure which he knew was the rightful property of Cora Leonard, Silver Joe stepped to the front of the cave in the pitch darkness and walked off into space.

CHAPTER VI.

MURDER AT THE DANCE.

About the time that Silver Joe stepped out of the cave there was a lively time at the Big Strike Saloon.

Cy Ellis, the one-eyed man, who had been sitting at the faro table taking his part in the game, and stepping up to the bar for a drink whenever there was a chance to get it for nothing, turned out to be the landlord of the saloon, although a stranger would never have suspected it.

For two hours after the sudden departure of the rival sports and Dan Whitton, the game went on, with varying results. Killer Newton, the dealer, dealt impassively, selling chips when they were called for and cashing them in on demand. It was noticeable, however, that he had little to do in the way of paying out money, for the "bank" was winning, and winning heavily.

It was perhaps two o'clock in the morning when Cyclops announced, authoritatively, that "The game is done."

Without an instant of dispute the dealer paid cash for the chips still in possession of the other players, and with a deft movement gathered up his "layout" of cards, and his dealing box, and stowed them all away in a valise kept behind the bar. Then he and Cy went into an adjoining room and closed the door.

"Hello, boys!" cried a cheery feminine voice, and all the "boys" took off their hats as a buxom damsel in a bright-colored cotton dress, with a big blue-cheeked apron, and with a broad-brimmed straw hat perched saucily on her red fluffy hair, swung into the saloon from the street and vaulted to the top of the bar, with her heels kicking carelessly against the front.

"Where have you come from, Mary?" asked the bartender, as he hustled about among his glasses. "Ain't this rather late for you to be out? What'll ye'r father say?"

Mary swung herself around on the bar, with her knees hugged up to her chin, as she looked into the face of the red-headed bartender with an expression of mingled indignation and amusement.

"Why, you half-baked son of a Chicago-muffin! What d'yer mean? Do you s'pose I don't know my biz, without you givin' me er pointer? When I want er tenderfoot ter teach me whar' ther trail is I guess I'll ask him; but, in ther meantime keep that ther' bear-trap of yours shut tight. Yer hear me?"

The other men laughed at this tirade, while Reddy went on jingling his glasses and wondering how long it would last. Then he answered, humbly:

"I didn't mean no harm."

"Wal, ef yer didn't, I don't mind tellin' yer that I wuz up ter ther big house, with old Margaret. Ther young gal come home ter-night—Miss Cora—an' I stayed ther' er chinnin' with her 'bout Denver. Ther superintendent went out, an' them two wimmin wuz alone, an I stayed with 'em fer company. They'll be down hyar in er minute or two. We're goin' ter hev' ther thar' birthday dance uv mine, but in course I hed ter wait till ther faro game quit."

With this brief explanation Mary jumped from the counter and threw her arms around the neck of Cyclops, as she planted a good, loud, hearty kiss on his bearded face.

"Thet's fer ye'rself, dad. Whar's ther fiddle an' ther mandolin? We want ter hev' er good dance ter-night. I ain't like-ly ter hev' 'nother twentieth birthday."

Newton, the dealer at faro, here stepped through the door with a box in his hand, from which he drew forth a violin that an expert would have at once pronounced to be a valuable instrument by certain unmistakable characteristics that could be discerned at a glance. This was proved when the player drew the bow across the strings in tuning it, and brought forth sonorous tones which could proceed only from an instrument made by a master.

Newton was a useful fellow. He was one of the best faro dealers in the West, and his skill with the violin made him in general request wherever there was a

dance. Then he had not acquired his sobriquet of "Killer" for nothing, and the fourteen notches on the butt of the big Colt's revolver which just showed itself beneath the skirt of his black sack coat told a dreadful tale of the shooting "scraps" he had been in since he had entered upon his career. That he had not escaped unscathed himself was shown by a long scar across his right cheek, reaching from his temple to the corner of his mouth, evidently made by a knife.

While Newton was busy with his violin Cyclops drew a mandolin from beneath the bar, and began twanging away at the strings with the skill of one well versed in the instrument.

"Whar's ther other gals and boys?" asked Cy, as he settled himself in an old chair at the end of the bar, while Killer, having pulled the table to one side, seated himself on the edge, prepared to begin to play.

"Hyar they air, dad," answered Mary, who had been standing at the outer door, looking into the black night.

She drew back, and a crowd of rough-looking young fellows, in the usual flannel shirt and overalls, with pistol-belts strapped around, and large-brimmed soft felt hats overhanging their brows, strolled in with the rather shame-faced expression that is considered etiquette at a party in a Western mining camp, while a babel of feminine chattering announced the presence of women who had come to the party at this extraordinary hour of the morning as composedly as their aristocratic sisters in Eastern cities would dash up in their carriages at ten or eleven at night.

"Sloot ye'r partners!" yelled Reddy, as master of ceremonies, and eight couples who had formed themselves into two sets of quadrilles, went through some peculiar gyrations to the music of the violin and mandolin, with exquisite enjoyment of the performance.

"Hands across, an' let her go! Swing ye'r partners, heel and toe!" bawled Reddy, and the rhythmical stamping of good solid feet on the floor made the shanty shake and every glass behind the bar jingle as if there was an earthquake.

Mary was dancing with Bunton, and her face was flushed with pleasure, when suddenly, as her glance turned toward the window looking into the street, and that was of course entirely uncurtained, she turned pale for a moment, and there was an absent-minded expression in her eye as she replied to some gallantry of her partner.

The quadrille over, the dancers went to their seats, but another quadrille was formed immediately, and as there were only eight women altogether, and about a score of men, it was obvious that the women had no rest, and that the only people to sit at the dance were the men.

By some arrangement that was not understood, and that was a decided breach of etiquette, Will Bunton was again Mary Ellis's partner. Tom Hawkins should have had the honor, but he gave up his turn to Will with the understanding that it was to be paid back later.

The quadrille was about half over when again Mary turned pale, and dropped out of the dance.

"You'll hev' ter 'scuse me, Will, fer a moment. I don't feel well," she said, hastily, and ran outside into the street.

"Queer critters, is wimmin," muttered Will. Then, winking at Tom Hawkins, he said: "Say, Tom, my gal has gone back on me. Come an' finish this dance with me."

Tom Hawkins took Mary's place, and the performances of the two men added to the zest of that particular quadrille, although some of the women wondered whether Mary was getting to care less for dancing than she used to do.

As for Mary, she was leaning against the corner of the house, looking up the road into the blackness, and trying to persuade herself that she was mistaken in thinking that she saw a sinister face glaring at her through the windows as she whirled about in the arms of Will Bunton.

"Guess I'm gittin' soft," she muttered,

as she wiped her hot face with a red pocket-handkerchief, and then tied it around her throat. "An' yet I could hev' sworn I seen his face at ther winder. It wuz either ther devil or—Dan Whitton!"

She uttered these last two words in a surprised, terrified tone, as a powerful hand seized her by the wrist and a voice hissed in her ear:

"Ef I see yer dance with that thar' cub ag'in yer won't never dance another step. You know me!"

It was Dan Whitton's hand tightening around her wrist, and Dan Whitton's voice conveying to her the threat which she well knew would not be an idle one.

"Yes, Dan," she answered, with unwanted meekness.

"Wal, then, mind what I tell yer. An' now, listen ter what I hev' ter say."

"Yes, Dan."

"You hev' heerd uv ther Fiery Triangle, an' you know that I've been waitin' till ther last man showed up with the piece of the secret that would let us gather in ther boddle?"

"Yes, Dan."

"Wal, ther man hez turned up, but, somehow, ther thing hez gone wrong. I hed one piece uv ther coin hidden away in er certain place up the canyon, but I found ter-night that it wuz gone, an' I suspect er certain man uv hevin' it. That man I've got er dead cinch on, but I can't git ther bit uv coin. What's more, that's that that Leonard a ravin' about, an' threatenin' ter tell what he knows ef I don't show him whar ther treasure is before this time ter-morrer night. Ez ef I wouldn't be glad ter git it myself! Why, that's half a million dollars' worth cached up in that thar' mountain somewhar."

"Yes, Dan."

"Quit ye'r 'Yes, Dan,' will yer? Yer make me sick," growled Dan, irritated by the meek responses of the girl. "An' I'll tell yer another thing. Ef I catch yer dancin' with that thar' Will Bunton ag'in, it will be ther worse fer yer. I've got trouble enough on my hands without hevin' that thar' snipe a dancin' with yer."

"Why, Dan, what's ther matter with Will Bunton?" asked Mary Ellis, innocently. "He's er friend uv yours, an' ef he likes ter dance with me I ain't a-goin' ter insult him. I ain't married ter you yet, an' maybe I never will marry yer. So don't be so fresh a-tellin' me who I may dance with."

Mary's natural spirit asserted itself, and, though she was in awe of Dan Whitton, she felt that the time had arrived when she must rebel, and she did it.

The man looked at her in the light of the window with a murderous scowl as she repeated, defiantly: "I like Will Bunton."

"Good fer you, Mary!" broke in a cheery voice, and Will Bunton, who had strolled out of the doorway unobserved, threw his arms around Mary's neck and gave her a hearty kiss.

The girl laughingly pulled herself away and looked at Dan Whitton doubtfully, but still smiling.

For an instant the desperado looked from one to the other, while his brows came down over his eyes in a frown that almost hid the glaring hate which gleamed forth. Then, with a lightning-like movement, two pistols flashed in the light of the window—one in Whitton's hand and the other held by Will Bunton.

There were two reports, which sounded almost like one, so close together, and Will Bunton, with an articulate cry, turned half around, threw his hands above his head, and fell upon his back, dead—shot through the heart.

At the same moment one of the sports sprang from the darkness somewhere, and clapped his hand on Whitton's shoulder.

"Murder!" said the sport, pleasantly, as the crowd from the saloon rushed out to see what was meant by the pistol-shots.

CHAPTER VII. THE INQUEST.

Cy Ellis was one of the first to comprehend the situation, and his revolver was pointed at Whitton's head as he commanded him to "Drop that thar' gun!"

Whitton looked sullenly at Cy, and then, as he saw that the one-eyed man's finger was twitching uneasily at the trigger of his big shooting-iron, he threw his pistol to the ground.

"Hands up!" continued Cy, and up went Whitton's hands.

They carried the body of Will Bunton into the saloon, and laid it on the floor in the middle of the room, while two or three officious men took from Dan Whitton his other pistol, a bowie-knife, and everything else in his pocket, including some gold-dust and gold coins.

"Give them things ter me," ordered Cy. "I'm coroner of this hyar county, and them things belongs ter me till I decide what is ter be done in this hyar case."

"Hold on," interposed the Silver Sport, suddenly. "Hold on! I have something to say here. My name is Joseph Hamilton, and I hold the position of marshal of Black Hawk County, by special appointment by the governor of Colorado, duly sealed and signed. Here's my paper."

The sport produced a big, official paper, with the seal of the State, in a golden star, and with the governor's name and other names signed in due form, setting forth that he was to be in supreme control as justice and marshal of Black Hawk County, and was moreover to take charge of the jail pertaining to that county.

"I act as coroner here," he continued, "and I'll take charge of this case and the property of the prisoner right away."

He looked carelessly at the different things which had been removed from the pockets of Whitton, and pushed them to one end of the bar, away from the crowd that had taken its stand at the end of the room, in some sort of order, preparing to witness the solemn proceedings of a coroner's inquest. Then the sport went over to Whitton, and felt in his pockets, the desperado eyeing him closely, and with extreme disfavor.

"Haven't you any other property, Whitton?" asked the sport, carelessly.

"No," was the sullen answer.

"H'm! What's this on the string down your shirt, around your neck?"

As he spoke Hamilton pulled out the string and the piece of coin attached, and Whitton, with a howl of rage, sprang at the sport's throat.

There was a loud thwack, and Whitton lay sprawling on the floor, while the Silver Sport coolly put the fragment of coin in his pocket, with his right hand, after knocking down the bully with his left.

Mary Ellis, with the usual inconsistency of young women, had been standing by the side of Dan Whitton, and it was she who helped the fallen hero to his feet, and gave him a handkerchief to put to his bleeding nose.

Hamilton chose a jury of twelve men from the company, and the evidence was soon in. Everybody in the house could testify that they heard the shots, that they went out and found Will Bunton lying dead, and Dan Whitton with his pistol in his hand. The new-comer testified that he saw the two men fire at each other, but that Dan Whitton had the quicker aim and shot first. There was a hole in the crown of Whitton's hat to show that Will Bunton's mark had not been so far off, and that probably if Whitton had not disturbed his aim by shooting him just before he pulled the trigger, Bunton might have killed his adversary.

"A complicated case," observed the coroner, with a judicial air. "Give me a glass of seltzer," he added, to Reddy the bartender.

Joe coolly drank his seltzer, and seemed to be thinking. Then he turned to Mary and remarked: "Here's a witness that we must examine. She saw the whole thing. What have you to say, Miss Ellis?"

"Say nothin'," interposed Cy. "My gal ain't mixed up with no shootin' scrapes, an' she ain't goin' ter testify afore this hyar co't, or no other, so long ez I hev' anythin' ter say."

"You haven't anything to say," observed Hamilton, coolly. "I am running this examination, Mr. Ellis."

"Air ye? Wal, I'm er runnin' my own daughter, an' I don't mean ter let her say nothin'," retorted Cy, obstinately. "I've been ther coroner uv this hyar county fer er long time, an' I know what's what. My daughter don't say nothin'. Yer hear what I say."

"Yes, I do hear what you say. And if you say anything more against the peace and dignity of this court, and in contravention of the statutes of the State of Colorado, I'll put you in jail. Mary Ellis, tell what you know about the causes that led up to this shooting, and who was the aggressor."

The Silver Sport spoke in a cold, determined tone that left no doubt of his intention to be obeyed, and Mary answered his questions without further hesitation, although Dan Whitton scowled at her threateningly, and whispered: "Ef yer give me away, look out fur yerself!"

"If the prisoner says another word to that witness I will have him gagged," proclaimed Hamilton, smilingly, as he turned to question Mary.

"Who made the provocation in this case?" he asked.

Mary looked around her at the attentive faces of the men and women, listening for her statement, and she noticed that the coffee boiling on the stove in the adjoining kitchen was giving forth a strong aroma that suggested its boiling over. Then she saw that some of the women held their babies in their arms, and that one little one on a bed, in a room by the side of the kitchen—and which was, in fact, her own room—was whimpering, and it seemed as if all these trifles were burned into her soul, as she moved her tongue in her hot, dry mouth, and tried to speak.

"I was a-talkin' ter Dan Whitton outside ther house, an' he was mad—jealous, I guess—"

"Jealous of whom?" asked the sport, quietly.

"Of Will Bunton."

"Ther deceased," put in Cy, with a solemn nod.

"Yes, the prisoner was jealous of Will Bunton," remarked the sport, smoothly. "Then, what happened?"

"Why, Dan shot Bunton dead, just as Bunton drawed his gun and tried to wipe out *l' n.*"

"*T*hat all?"

"That's all," answered Mary, with a side glance at Whitton, who was wiping his face on the sleeve of his flannel shirt, and grinding his teeth under his heavy mustache.

"Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the evidence," said the sport, facing the twelve men, who immediately assumed expressions of deep wisdom, and chewed their tobacco a little harder than before. "If you believe that the shooting was unprovoked, you must bring in a verdict of willful murder against the prisoner, Daniel Whitton. But if you think he fired the fatal shot purely in self-defense, you must acquit him, by determining that it was justifiable homicide. That's all. You may now confer and settle upon your verdict."

"We don't want to confer," declared the foreman, Tom Hawkins, a big man with a big beard, who was chewing tobacco faster than any of his companions. "This hyar Dan Whitton is a or'nary cuss anyhow, an' we don't like him. He ain't treated that thar' gal jest right, and I don't think we want him hyar in Black Hawk, anyhow. So my verdict is guilty. What do ye say, boys?" turning to the other jurymen.

One juryman thought he was guilty unless he could prove an alibi, and another thought perhaps if he wasn't guilty this time he might be at some future day. Still another declared that Whitton had once beaten him in a horse trade, and therefore he was guilty. The rest of the twelve gave various reasons, but all agreed that Dan Whitton was guilty and should be punished.

"Very well, gentleman. I am satisfied," said the sport. Then, turning to Whitton, he added: "Daniel Whitton, a jury of your peers has found you guilty of the murder, by felonious shooting, of the de-

ceased, William Bunton, and you will go to the county jail of Black Hawk, there to await your trial by the grand jury and the court of general sessions. I will take you to jail myself."

Without another word Hamilton stepped up to Whitton and seized him by the shoulder. For an instant the desperado looked as if he would resist, but a glance at the pistol held in the right hand of the sport, ready for use, and at the threatening faces of the men around him, made him change his intention, if he had harbored it, and he went quietly out into the night, with the calm, smiling man in the neat clothes and silk hat.

As the door closed behind them, Mary Ellis stepped over to the corpse, and, taking the handkerchief that had been placed over the face, in her hands, looked sorrowfully at the rigid features, while something like a tear glittered in her eye.

"Wonder ef that' gal did car' somethin' 'bout Will Bunton," muttered Cy, as he composed himself on his chair to think the matter over.

"Looks like it, don't it," remarked Newton, who was idly picking the strings of his violin, and looking on at the doings in the shanty with the unconcern of a man who had seen too many men die with their boots on from his own hand to be much affected.

Mary dropped the handkerchief on the face, and half a dozen men carried the table, corpse and all, into the adjoining stable, to prepare it for the funeral that would take place next day, while Mary, with a toss of her head, as if to get rid of a disagreeable thought, whispered to herself:

"Thet's one uv ther men that Dan Whitton said he'd wipe out, an' Dan alders keeps his word 'bout things like that. Wonder who'll be ther next?"

And that moment, Walter Leonard burst into the shanty, his face flaming with excitement, and a six-shooter in his hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MID-AIR SMOKE.

When Silver Joe stepped out of the cave, supposing that the ledge was still there, he had no thought of danger such as he met. The fall of the mass of rock had been silent, and when it reached the bottom of the canyon, two thousand feet below, the crash was deadened by distance, and could hardly have been distinguished at the height of the cave, even if one had been listening for it.

It was with difficulty that Silver Joe repressed a cry of fear as he realized, with the quickness of an electric flash, that he was falling.

Instinctively he stretched out his hands, but they touched only the face of the rock as he went down! Then he stopped, with a jarring twitch that seemed to dislocate every nerve and bone in his body, and he lost consciousness for a few seconds.

"Where is the Silver Chief?"

It was the voice of the Indian, and it was accompanied by a whiff of tobacco smoke that curled up into Silver Joe's nostrils, and seemed to give him assurance that he was still in the world. He might have fancied himself dead, and in another state of existence, but there was no reason to suppose that such a commonplace thing as this tobacco smoke was to be found in the spirit world, particularly when he recognized that it was the pungent weed that Waga always used, and that was very different from that ordinarily consumed by the miners of Black Hawk!

"Where is the Silver Chief? Is my brother still well?"

"Still well? Hardly, Waga," answered Silver Joe, smiling, in spite of himself. "When a fellow pitches down a canyon a thousand feet or so, he isn't likely to be very well, no matter how tough he may be. I am just hanging onto this bush, and I have scratches and cuts all over me, and I've lost my hat."

Joe spoke so regretfully about the loss of his hat that it would have made anybody but an Indian laugh, probably. But Waga had no more sense of humor than any other individual of his race, and he

took the words of the sport with perfect seriousness.

Joe had been hanging in a thick bunch of branches and fir cones as he spoke, and now that he had time, realized what a narrow escape he had had from an awful death.

"And the worst of it would be if I were wiped out now, that I could do nothing more for the girl. And I swore to her dead father that Cora Leonard should have the treasure of the Fiery Triangle, no matter if I gave my life to get it for her. It is hers, rightfully, and all the Walter Leonards and Dan Whittons sha'n't keep it from her so long as Joe Hamilton can fight for it."

While Silver Joe thus reflected, he was not idle. There was a moon up now, and although it was not high yet, it shed a slight reflection into the canyon, and Joe Hamilton could distinguish something of his surroundings. He saw that he was suspended in mid-air, as it were, with nothing to hold him from the dreadful blackness below but a bush that might be loosened from the fissure through which it had grown by a very small movement on his part.

"Where are you, Waga?" he asked, as he tried to peer into the gloom below, and make out where the Indian was.

The tobacco smoke was still curling about him, and he knew that Waga could not be at the bottom of the canyon, but must be somewhere near him, to allow the smoke to reach him so easily.

"The Silver Chief should open his eyes, and let them rest upon the face of Waga," came the answer, in the deliberate tones peculiar to the Indian.

"My eyes are open, but where in thunderation are you? Talk United States and quit your confounded council-fire balledash."

"I see my white brother," answered the Indian, as another puff of tobacco smoke almost choked the Silver Sport.

Joe stretched his neck over the edge of the fir tree, holding tightly to the thick limb that seemed to give him the most security, and could just make out the face of Waga in the darkness, some six feet below him and close to the wall of the canyon.

"Where are you, Waga?" he asked. "Is that another hole in the rocks?"

"The Silver Chief speaks wisely. The foxes, the dogs, and the eagles find safety from their foes, and the redman should be as wise as the foxes and the wolves."

"I should like to turn the hose on him," muttered Joe. "But that's the way with Indians, whether they are in their war-paint or only hanging about a camp. They can't come to the point. Hello! Waga is waking up now, though."

The last part of his remarks was caused by the sudden appearance of a long stick—a branch of a tree—that came up to him with his silk hat on the end of it.

The Silver Sport hastily recovered his hat, and brushed it carefully and solicitously, as he saw that it had become somewhat ruffled by its tumble. Then he looked over the edge of the tree again and saw that the stick was being withdrawn into the hole in the rock, where he knew the Indian must be standing.

"Where are the other fellows, Waga?" he asked. "If they are around here, I suppose they will take care I never get out of this."

"They have gone back to camp. They cannot get the treasure until they find the other piece of gold. They thought they knew where it was hidden, but there was dust in their eyes, and they were blinded to the truth. The fifth piece of gold is missing."

As the Indian spoke Silver Joe involuntarily clapped his hand to his shirt, and felt that the segment of coin was still safe in his possession.

"I know that, Waga. You have one, haven't you?"

"Waga has one, Walter Leonard has one, Dan Whitton has one, he that looks like the white chief has one, and—"

The Indian stopped, and Silver Joe asked, curiously:

"Go on, Waga, who has the other?"

"Till the Silver Chief tells, Waga's

mouth shall not be opened," answered the Indian, sententiously, and the Silver Sport smiled at the artfulness of the redskin, who was content to let Silver Joe know that he was aware of the whereabouts of the fifth piece of coin, without saying so in so many words.

"Now, the question is, how am I to get out of this?" asked Joe, in a matter-of-fact way.

"Stay till Waga comes."

Joe, being of a philosophical nature and satisfied that everything would end right in the course of time, asked Waga for a smoke, and was not at all surprised when a pipe, full of tobacco, which was alight, came up to him in the forked end of the branch from below.

"All right, Waga! Hurry up, and I'll smoke till I hear from you," and the sport pulled away in intense enjoyment of the Indian's tobacco.

"The white chief is brave," muttered Waga, admiringly, as he disappeared within the hole in the rock, and left Joe Hamilton to his pipe and reflections.

The sport's first care was to make sure that the branch would hold him if he shifted his position. Then he moved himself slightly, so that he could sit with some approach to comfort on the crooked limbs, and at the same time spread himself over as much space as possible, to distribute his weight.

"I am going to push this thing right through," he mused. "Those blackguards think, of course, I have tumbled into the canyon, and they will not trouble me again for a time. I know where all the pieces of coin are now, and I have the game in my own hands. It is a good thing that Waga is friendly to me. But I knew I could get him. He would do anything for Golden Star, as he calls her, and if that failed, I should only have to convince him that it was not Cold Deck, but Silver Joe, who saved his life when the soldiers were going to wipe him out in Arizona, and I should have him on my side, sure."

"When I get the treasure for Cora, which I will, I have only to settle scores with Dan Whitton and Cold Deck, then I will go back to Denver and be comfortable. I think I have earned a little rest now, after my wild life for the last ten years, and even the temptation of being marshal of Black Hawk, which position I got from the governor to help me in this expedition, would not induce me to stay in this neighborhood and away from civilization."

Joe Hamilton pulled away at his pipe as he thus reflected, and a sigh came forth with a big puff of tobacco smoke as his thoughts took a new turn.

"I am only a year over thirty, and yet—"

He went on smoking without ever finishing the thought. Then he took up the thread of his reverie a little farther on: "Cora Leonard is a sweet girl, and I think that when she knows how true a friend Silver Joe is to her, she might— Pshaw! What have I to do with love and marriage? I, the Silver Sport, the man who has played cards since he was a baby, and whose only good point in that connection is that he has always played a square game! Still, I don't know. My family is good, and she might think I am all right, if I can convince her that I am in earnest so far as she is concerned. Ever since I saw her walking with the girls from that Denver academy I have been hard hit, and—"

He stopped his reflections and listened. He could just distinguish the mournful cry of a wolf, and then a low whistle, and he took his pipe from his mouth, and answered with the same kind of wolf's cry.

"Waga is here," came down in the tones of the Indian, but, as Silver Joe noted, with something of a sinking at his heart, a long way above him.

"All right, Waga; and I am here. How far down am I?"

"Two hundred feet."

"Impossible!"

"Waga's tongue cannot lie," answered the Indian, with a tinge of indignation in his accents.

"I don't know about that," muttered the sport. "I don't trust an Indian on general principles, but I guess he's telling the truth this time." Then he added, aloud: "How am I to get out of this?"

"Waga will do it."

"Good! Go ahead!" The sport went on smoking calmly, for he knew that Waga was busy for him above, and there was nothing for Joe to do at present save to wait for developments.

He had smoked for nearly five minutes without hearing or seeing anything of Waga; then a light string, with something at the end of it, dangled against his face.

He could not tell what it was that was tied to the string, because it was some distance below him, but the thin string rather puzzled him, as he looked upward into the darkness, that was relieved to some extent by the vagrant rays of the moon, and remarked, coolly:

"Waga, this won't bear my weight."

"Does my brother think Waga is a fool?"

"That depends," answered Joe. "If you think I can climb up this string, I'm afraid I can't say much for your intelligence."

"Let the Silver Chief pull the string."

Joe did so, to find a powerful bowie knife tied to the end of the string. The blade was not only sharpened keenly all the way down, but the point was thickened in a peculiar fashion, so that it would not break off easily.

"This must have been made to order," thought Joe. "I have seen a good many bowies, but I never handled one with a point like this."

He was about to unfasten it from the end of the string, when Waga's voice interposed: "Do not untie it."

"Why?"

"Waga has spoken," was the dignified retort.

"I'd raise you with such a kick if I were up there," muttered Joe, half angry and half laughing. Then he added, aloud: "What am I to do, Waga?"

"Cut holes in the face of the cliff and come up. Waga has spoken."

The Indian said no more, and Silver Joe crouched on his bush, and thought with some dismay of the climb before him. To go up, hand over hand, for two hundred feet, with two thousand feet of emptiness below, was something to appall even so stout a heart as that of Silver Joe.

He strained his eyes in looking up, and saw that, at intervals, there were bushes like that which supported him, and which might afford him resting places. As for the rocks themselves, he knew that there would be comparatively soft places here and there, where he could dig in his knife, and that, provided the knife did not break, it would be only a question of endurance and agility on his part.

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, put the pipe into his coat pocket, and then tightened the belt about his waist.

"If I fall, Cora Leonard will never get her rights, I am afraid, but, at the same time, the treasure will not get into the hands of the rascals that have no right to it. But then, I don't mean to fall. Joe Hamilton's time has not come yet, I feel sure of it!"

With this thought to console him, Silver Joe drew himself up to his full height on the pine shrub, and began to dig away in the rock about level with his eyes, to make his first handhold.

CHAPTER IX. ON THE BACK TRAIL.

It was hard work, but Joe accomplished it in an almost incredibly short time. Then he tested the use of the hole as a means of climbing, by drawing himself up gently and allowing himself to swing, with his feet a few inches above the shrub that supported him.

"I guess that will do," he thought, "but there would be no use in taking too many chances. Now for a place for my foot."

He dug another hole below the first, just far enough above the shrub to enable him to place his foot in it, while he held by the higher hole. This took him a little above the shrub, and his work began in earnest.

He had not heard anything more of Waga, but supposed that he was ready to give a hand when he should come within reach. At present, however, the Silver Sport must depend only upon himself. No one could help him in his awful climb, and if he fell now, it would be all up with him.

Holding firmly by one hand and one foot, he dug as high as he could reach, and when the hole was completed, drew himself up by that, but had no hole for his foot. Fortunately, there was a slight protuberance in the face of the rock, and he was able to rest his foot upon it while he dug his next hole. Then he had the first hand hole for his foot, and for the rest of the journey had no trouble in respect to finding a place for his foot, because he had the choice of holes and the occasional roughness in the rocks that served for a support to so agile a fellow as he was.

He had climbed probably twenty feet above the shrub upon which he had been caught in his downward flight from the cave, when he found another shrub even larger than the first one.

"Silver Joe, you're in luck," he muttered. "There are steps and landing places made for you, and you are on velvet, as we say in Denver. I'll have the laugh on Cold Deck yet."

By a great effort he drew himself up until he lay at full length on the friendly shrub, breathing hard after his exertions, and thankful that he had made his way thus far.

"The job isn't over yet, though, by a good deal," he thought, as he looked upward, and could just distinguish the great jagged spot where the ledge had broken off just at the mouth of the cave.

In five minutes he felt sufficiently revived to make another start, making up his mind to steer direct for another shrub about thirty feet higher and a little to his left.

"I don't want to go up straight, anyhow, because that would take me to the cave, and perhaps I should have trouble in getting out."

He had just completed the first hole above his head when the knife slipped from his fingers, and, although he clutched wildly for it, and almost lost his balance in doing so, it went hurtling down the chasm.

Joe was dumfounded for the moment. His only hope of getting out of his predicament was with the aid of the knife, and now that was gone.

"He looked up and then called: 'Waga!'"

"What does the Silver Chief ask?"

"Oh, you are there, eh, Waga? I've dropped my knife."

"Ugh!"

Silver Joe smiled in spite of himself at this sententious comment, and wondered what it meant, when he felt the thin string rubbing against his face.

"Silver Joe," he exclaimed, half aloud, "when you get out of this hole your first duty will be to kick yourself. Waga has more sense than you, if you are a white man and he only a poor barbarian. The knife is tied to the end of the string, and now I see why he told me not to untie it."

In another minute, knife in hand, he was again digging at the crevice at which he had been working when the knife dropped.

It is unnecessary to follow Silver Joe in his laborious trip up the chasm. Happily, he found bushes at intervals, where he was able to rest and gather strength for a renewal of his trip, and at last he was hanging on by one foot and one hand in holes, and the other foot resting upon a stump that protruded from the rocks, and that had probably been struck by lightning at some time, waiting for Waga's assistance to get him over the edge of the precipice into safety.

By working considerably to the left he was clear of the edge of the cave, and his chief difficulty now was that the ledge overhung him by about a foot, and made it absolutely impossible for him to climb over unaided.

"Waga!"

"Waga hears."

"Give me your hand."

The Indian's face appeared over the ledge, and his long, sinewy arm reached over till he was able to grasp the wrist of the hand that held the bowie.

"Let the knife go," commanded Waga, quietly.

Silver Joe obeyed, and the bowie dropped to the full length of the string, that was fastened to something on the ledge by the side of the Indian.

Then Waga, exerting his tremendous strength, pulled, and the sport swung clear of the wall.

It was an awful situation! Below him two thousand feet of blackness and death, above him nothing but the sky, and the Indian holding him by one wrist.

It was only for a second. With a convulsive movement, Waga dragged Silver Joe up a few inches, and then—how, he never could tell—Silver Joe grasped the edge of the cliff and squirmed to a solid perch.

"Whew!"

This was Silver Joe's first remark, as he saw that Waga was squatting on the edge of the cliff, calmly smoking, and pulling up the string with the bowie knife on the end.

Joe looked at the moon, which had passed the meridian, and was slowly sinking, and he made up his mind that the night was well advanced, and that daylight would appear within an hour. He carried a watch, but the tumble over the cliff had jarred it, and a visit to a watch-maker's would be necessary before the article would tell him the time again.

"Waga, you know why I am here?"

"To find the gold for Golden Star."

"Exactly. Now, I'll tell you something else. Golden Star's father was killed!"

"Ugh!" ejaculated Waga, which meant that he was aware of that fact.

"Do you know who killed him? No, I see you don't. Well, the man who killed George Leonard was his half-brother, Walter Leonard, and that is how he has possession of the two pieces of gold coin that contain the secret of the fiery triangle."

"Ugh!" There was menace in this exclamation now, as Joe noted with some satisfaction.

"One of these pieces he keeps in his own possession, and Dan Whitton has the other, but Walter Leonard controls them both, so long as Whitton does not become treacherous."

"What would the Silver Chief have Waga do?"

"You have one piece of the coin?"

For answer, the Indian drew out a segment of the moidore and handed it to Silver Joe.

Joe pushed it back with the remark: "Good, Waga. I see that you are with me. But you keep it till I am ready for it. What we have to do now is to get the three other pieces, and use them. Nothing can be done till the whole five bits of gold are together, and it is certain that there can be no coming together of all the people that hold them at present. A few hours ago these rascals were chasing me. Now I am the pursuer, and I'll live on their trail until I get the treasure for Cora Leonard, and avenge her father's death."

Waga arose and beckoned Joe to follow him.

In a few minutes they were in Waga's cabin. When the door was fastened, the Indian handed the sport the pistols so rudely taken from him by Cold Deck a short time previously.

Joe, examining his weapons, saw that they were not injured in any way, but he threw out the cartridges and filled all the chambers with fresh cartridges from his pockets, which had not been emptied when Leonard and Cold Deck supposed they had him in their power.

As he strapped the revolvers into his belt, Joe Hamilton felt that he was a match for any number of rascals of the Leonard and Cold Deck stamp, with Dan Whitton thrown in as a make-weight; and, although he was not of a demonstrative disposition, he could not restrain himself from dancing a few steps of a hornpipe in the exuberance of his feelings. A proceeding at which Waga looked with undisguised disgust.

"Come, Waga," and the Silver Sport opened the door by which he had entered, but opposite to that used by Whitton, Leonard and Cold Deck.

"How do you work this, Waga?" he asked.

Waga stepped to his side, and pulled a wooden lever hidden behind the boards of the cabin wall, and a mass of rock swung easily aside, letting the sharp morning air in, and showing the sport how to get out.

"We'll go this way, Waga. It is a shorter cut than the other, although it is not quite such good walking."

The two were soon down in the canyon, walking along the narrow ledge over which Joe had come to the Indian's cabin, and which had led him into such unlooked-for and perilous adventures. They had reached the top of the hilly street, in front of the house of the superintendent, when Waga, whose sharp eyes were on duty, placed his hand on the other's shoulder and whispered: "Stop!"

"What do you see, Waga? Blessed if I can make out anything in that blackness."

"My brother's double comes."

"Cold Deck?"

"Ugh!" answered the Indian, in assent. "He has by the arm the Big Grizzly, and is dragging him this way."

"Dan Whitton is the Big Grizzly," muttered the Silver Sport. "What new devilment is up now, I wonder? Can they have fallen out? I will soon know."

Drawing Waga into the shadow of the superintendent's house, where they could peer out through the vines on the porch, they waited for the procession to come up the street.

As they drew nearer Joe saw that Dick Cole and Dan Whitton were walking as if Dan were indeed a prisoner, and then he observed, creeping behind them, a few yards, the figure of a woman, keeping close to the shanties as she came, as if she desired to avoid observation.

CHAPTER X.

SILVER JOE FOOLED FOR ONCE.

On came Dick Cole and his prisoner—for Joe saw that Dan was really a prisoner now—and the woman followed at a respectful distance, but still near enough to see all that was passing between the two then marching up the street.

"What does it mean?" muttered Silver Joe. "Are they going into the house here to settle on a new plan of action? Yes, that must be the business. I suppose they have been down to Cy Ellis's place for a drink. But what is that woman doing behind them?" Then, as a glint of the dying moon fell across her face, he saw that it was Mary Ellis.

Black Hawk, though a small place, was the county seat, and had a jail which served for half a dozen counties. To this jail Cold Deck and Dan Whitton traveled, past Silver Joe and Waga in their hiding place, and off to the left when they had passed it, instead of to the right, which was the way to the canyon where the Indian's shanty stood high above the valley.

Joe could not understand this move, and just as Mary Ellis reached the corner of the house, keeping close in the shadow as she came along, Joe whispered something in Waga's ear that produced prompt response.

With the silent swiftness peculiar to the Indian nature, Waga stepped from the cover of the house, and while one hand was fast in Mary's long red hair, the other was clapped over her mouth,

and she was both helpless and speechless.

"Keep quiet, Mary! Don't be afraid. This is Joe Hamilton—Silver Joe, of the Boulevard, whom you know," whispered Joe, in the girl's ear.

Mary turned her eyes toward the sport, who was now at her side, and looked intently at him to make sure that he was not the sport's double, whom she dreaded and despised—Cold Deck. Then, as she saw the couple several yards before her, she realized that this must indeed be Silver Joe, and put out her right hand to take his, and gave it a peculiar clutch.

"Drop her, Waga! I have the sign."

Waga obeyed, and Joe drew Mary a little aside, where they would not be seen in case Cold Deck or Dan should look back.

"What are they doing?" he asked, with a jerk of his head toward the men going up the road, and who were just turning a corner out of sight.

In a few words Mary told the Silver Sport the whole story; whereat he smiled as if he had a pleasant thought of something he intended to do. Then he motioned to Waga to step along, and gave him a few hurried directions.

"Mary, what do you intend to do?" he asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Shall you stick to Dan Whitton, or do you mean to stand by the girl who has been a sister to you since you were a little child—Cora Leonard?"

The girl hesitated, and it was easy for the sport to see that she was undergoing a severe mental struggle.

"Dan would kill me if I went back on him," she answered, at last.

"I'll take care of that," assured the sport, quietly. "You do not care much about him? You don't want to marry him, do you?"

"Oh, no, no!" shuddered the girl. "But father thinks it would be a good thing."

"I'll fix father."

"You wouldn't hurt dad, would you?" demanded Mary, hastily, a touch of terror in her voice.

"Of course not. I only want to make him understand that you have some rights as well as Dan Whitton. That is all."

The girl did not answer. She was standing with her face toward the superintendent's house, and a strange light came into her eyes, that caught the sport's attention. He instinctively put his hand to his belt, but before he could draw a weapon an arm was thrown around his waist and his arm was held tightly to his side, while a voice that he believed to be that of Walter Leonard, although he could not be sure of it, so disguised was it in fierce rage, whispered:

"This time, my friend, you shan't get away!"

With sudden and resistless force he was pulled and shoved backward, and thrust into an open door that opened directly into the basement cellar. This done, the door closed with a bang, and Joe Hamilton understood that, for the time being, he was at the mercy of the superintendent.

For half an hour he walked about this stone-bound prison, which he found to be a place not more than ten feet square, at the rear of the house, and seemingly hewn out of solid rock.

Finally Joe pulled out his cigar-lighter, and struck a light, by which he examined the roof and walls of his prison. He saw only one door, that by which he had entered, and which was of dark wood, bound across and across with flat iron bands, and studded with immense nails, or rather spikes.

"Confound this fellow! Just as I was getting everything all right, too," muttered Joe. Then his sense of humor came to his relief, and he stood in the middle of the cellar, holding a revolver in one hand and his burning cigar-lighter in the other, laughing heartily, but silently.

"Caught me like a rat in a trap," he chuckled. "Good for Leonard! If he wasn't such a rascal, I should admire

him. As it is, I must circumvent him as soon as possible. I have wasted too much time on this job. I thought I should have had no trouble at all, comparatively, knowing where the five pieces of coin were. But you can never tell, and I am in a pretty bad fix now, even—"

He stopped, and, in spite of his natural courage, he felt his hair rising under his silk hat.

The cigar-lighter had gone out, and he had been in pitch darkness at the end of his musing remarks. But now a weird blue light pervaded the cellar, and his eyes were fixed upon a spot in the wall, by the side of the door.

The familiar fiery triangle was there! This would not have startled him so much, because he had seen the sign several times in the superintendent's house, and regarded the appearance as a bit of hocus-pocus used by the cunning Leonard to impress his subordinates with his occult power.

But there was something else, now—something that made Silver Joe shiver, although what he saw was a vision of what was always in his mind, and which was the dearest thought he had.

The face of Cora Leonard seemed to be actually in the stone wall, in the midst of a halo of dazzling whiteness.

Silver Joe clutched his revolver, and, in the first moment of his astonishment, was inclined to point it at the appearance, that he could but regard as some devilish device of his enemy.

"It's Cora, and yet it isn't!" he muttered, as he nervously fingered the trigger of his revolver, that he had dropped to his side, with the muzzle pointing to the floor.

The face remained in or on the wall, and now he saw that the eyes were moving, following him as he moved from side to side, in the extremity of his astonishment.

"I've got to find out what it is," he thought, and at the thought he rushed forward.

Ere he could reach the wall the fiery triangle, the halo and the face all disappeared simultaneously, and the pit was black dark, as before, while a pungent odor filled the place, and his nerves seemed to recover their wonted quiet tone under its influence.

"Silver Joe, what have you struck?" he said, aloud.

"Keep quiet, and I'll tell you," answered a voice seemingly at his very side—a voice that he recognized with a thrill of pleasure as that of Cora Leonard.

"Cora?"

"Yes, Cora. I've been looking for you since last night, when I found that I had mistaken you for Cold Deck. I knew there must be some important enterprise to bring you here, because you are not the man to be spared from Denver for nothing."

Joe kept his face turned toward the spot from which the voice came, and held out his hand. A silvery laugh was the only response, as Cora's voice resumed, after a moment's pause:

"You needn't reach for my hand. It is out of reach, Mr. Hamilton. Besides, I have never been introduced to you. I was only saying that you are not easily spared from Denver. I know you, as every one else does, as the Sport Detective, who fears neither man nor devil, and who tells every one who asks that he is known as the Silver Sport, of the Boulevard."

Joe was content to listen to all this, although it conveyed no information to him, for the sake of hearing Cora Leonard speak; in fact, he forgot his predicament altogether.

Suddenly, however, the light blazed out again, and there was the fiery triangle, the halo, and Cora's face in the middle of the light, laughing mischievously.

"My father is a good chemist, but he hasn't all the knowledge of it in the family. I have been a close pupil, so can work the vision of the silver triangle as well as he. If you could reach up to where I am, in this wall, this appearance

would not strike you as so very remarkable. It is easily explained. But the main thing is to release you. I do not know what object father has in keeping you in this place, but you are not going to stay here."

This was good news to the Silver Sport, who had other matters to claim his attention, and felt that he could not afford to be detained there, even to oblige the man whom Cora Leonard believed to be her father.

The light disappeared, but almost before he had time to think about it, he felt a soft hand upon his wrist, and he was being pulled along toward the side of the cellar opposite the door by which he had entered.

Not a word was spoken, but Joe was content to feel the soft hand touching him, and to realize that the young girl in whose behalf he was willing to risk his life was at his side.

In a few moments he felt the cool air blowing across his forehead, although he was still in darkness. He took off his silk hat, and carried it in his left hand, for in his right was still his revolver, which he could not replace in his belt, if he had wished to do so, since it was that wrist which was clasped by the hand of his companion.

"Where are we?" he whispered.

There was no answer, the gentle pulling of the hand being the only assurance.

At last they reached a doorway, that he could just make out, for the moon had sunk now, and it was that particularly dark period of the night just before the dawn.

Still not a word was spoken, although he could make out the figure of his companion, with a white shawl thrown over her head and almost concealing her face.

Out into the open air, with a few stars just distinguishable in the blank canopy overhead, and then to the foot of a ladder that seemed to have risen out of the earth, so suddenly had it come into view.

Still without a word, the girl led him to the foot of the ladder, and pointed upward significantly.

"Which means that I am to climb this ladder to get out," thought Joe. "I must not speak, that is evident. But at least I will get one close look at her. I may never see her again, and I should like to carry with me the remembrance of her sweet face at this moment when she is fighting for me."

With a quick movement he drew out his cigar-lighter, and flashed it into light, throwing a strong glare upon the face of old Margaret, the deaf and obstinate old nurse of Cora Leonard.

CHAPTER XI. JOE SCORES ONE.

For a moment, Silver Joe looked blankly into the face of the old woman, who, as she could not hear a word, was all the sharper as to her vision, and watched every shade of expression on the sport's face with an intelligence he noted with the quickness of his nature and training as a detective.

"Sharp old woman, that!" he decided, as his light went out. "Good old woman, too, if she is deaf. Friend of Cora's, too. But how did that girl fool me?"

He began to climb the ladder, for he realized that it was the proper thing to move quickly, and soon found himself in the cave high up in the wall, to which reference has been made in a previous chapter.

"I suppose there must be some way out of the place this way," he inferred, as he felt his way around the cave, and found the few articles that Walter Leonard kept there—the crocks of butter, the draughtsman's instruments, and the surveying paraphernalia.

The ever-useful cigar-lighter enabled Joe to look about his quarters, but the soft cry of a wolf made him put out his light quickly and step to the opening of the cavern to give the answering cry.

"Waga wants something," he muttered. "That Indian is a mighty useful friend, so long as he is kept from liquor."

The Silver Sport waited a moment, after giving the answering signal; then he could feel a slight jarring of the iron ladder which reached the cave, and upon which he had rested his hand as he had called. Some one was ascending. As a measure of precaution, Joe drew his pistol, but soon discovering that it was indeed Waga who was coming, he waited until the Indian had reached the top before he asked:

"Well, Waga, is the coast clear?"

The redskin nodded.

"I thought that fellow Leonard was prowling about the outside of the house, and that is the reason I was sent up here, I guess."

"He is in his house," remarked Waga, apathetically. Then, as Joe struck his cigar-lighter again, and illuminated the interior of the cave with a slight blue glare, the Indian ran over to the case of draughtsman's instruments and examined them with care, uttering his characteristic "Ugh!" as he did so.

"What's the matter, Waga?"

"The Big Serpent has been making plans."

"You mean to find the treasure?"

The Indian bowed his head.

"Where are they?"

Waga pointed significantly to the house.

"You think he knows more about the treasure than we do, even if we had the whole five pieces of coin, and that he is trying to work out the secret without the help of the coin? Is that it, Waga?"

Again the Indian nodded; then he showed the sport that the surveyor's instruments were muddy, indicating that they had been in use recently, for the mud was hardly dry on them.

"You're right, Waga. He couldn't even be honest with his own accomplices. He has been trying to steal a march upon them. I must find the plans he has made, if he has made any, so that I can beat him at his own game. That treasure must be found without delay, Waga!"

The Indian grunted in acquiescence, and then seized a bottle which he had discovered in a corner, and, pulling out the cork with his teeth, was about to indulge in a good swig, when Joe snatched the bottle away and smelt it.

"Just what I thought. Whisky! No, Waga; I want you to be sober now. When you get your share of the treasure you can have firewater, because I suppose no one could keep it from you. But at the present time I could not afford to have a drunken Indian on my hands."

He put the bottle back into its corner, and motioned Waga to go down the iron ladder, which now, in the gray of morning, was plainly discernible all the way down.

The Indian looked cautiously about him, and then went down swiftly, with Silver Joe following him so closely as to almost tread upon his fingers.

As they reached the bottom, Mary Ellis came from the porch, and held up her finger warningly. Then she pointed to the front door of the house, which was a little ajar.

"Walter Leonard has gone into the house and up to his room, and he is asleep. Old Margaret and Cora told me to let you know that he was safe, for the present, so that you need not go the way they meant to show you—through the upper cave!"

Joe uttered a whistle below his breath. So, there was some way of getting off the premises by that upper cave! He must explore that, at some future time. But not now. A new plan had come into his head, and he meant to follow it up without delay.

"Where are they—Margaret and Cora?"

"In their room, down-stairs."

"And Leonard?"

"Up-stairs, in his private den, by the side of the parlor."

"Do you know the way?"

"I know every inch of this house," was the confident answer.

"Show me the way to Walter Leonard's room," commanded the sport, briefly.

The girl looked at him in alarm.

"Do you mean that?" she asked.

"Don't I always mean what I say?" demanded the sport.

Up-stairs they went, the Indian following. It was broad daylight now, and there was no difficulty in finding the way. The table under which Joe had hidden the night before was still in the hall, and Joe laughed to himself as he thought how neatly he had kept Cold Deck a prisoner under it through fear of the imaginary nitro-glycerine.

The door of the parlor was unfastened, save for the ordinary lock, that was opened by turning the handle, and Silver Joe, Mary, and the Indian soon stood inside the parlor and looked about them. The room was handsomely furnished, as has already been shown, but the mysterious lights and reflections were not there now, in the daylight that made its way through the half-open shutters of one of the windows, and the fiery triangle and other devices that could be made so terrifying at night, by the aid of ingeniously-worked electric machinery, were rather commonplace in the daylight.

"Waga!"

The sport pointed to the door that led to the adjoining room, in which they knew Walter Leonard to be. The Indian dropped upon his knees and listened intently at the door. Then he rested his head sideways upon his hand to signify that Leonard was asleep, drawing two or three longer breaths to convey the fact still more clearly.

"All right" whispered Joe. "Now, we must have that bit of coin from his neck! Understand?"

Waga drew a knife from the folds of his ragged clothing and flourished it significantly. Then, with a soft tread, he was over at the door again, listening.

Silver Joe shook his head significantly at the Indian as he motioned to him to put his knife away.

"We don't want any knife in this business. You must get the coin away from him without that. Open the door!"

The Indian tried the door, but it was locked. Mary Ellis went to it with a key that she took from her pocket, and Joe was about to express his satisfaction, when she turned away discomfited. The key would not fit.

"It's Cora's key—the only one besides the key he carries himself. He must have shot the secret bolt inside, which throws the lock out, and can be opened only with another special key, that no one has been allowed to see," explained the girl.

It might be wondered how Mary knew so much about the arrangements of Walter Leonard's house, but the explanation was that she and Cora were the closest of friends, and there were few secrets between the two girls, different as were their social positions.

Joe Hamilton was nonplussed for an instant—but only for an instant. He would pick the lock—that was the only hope. A button-hook, which he bent almost straight with his powerful fingers, gave him a tool of convenient shape, and he pushed it into the keyhole and moved it cautiously while Waga and the girl watched.

At last, with a satisfied smile, he drew back as he heard the lock slip on the other side of the door.

A moment's pause, and the door was open—all three standing in silence to hear whether Walter Leonard was awake and moving.

No sound, and Silver Joe stepped into the room. There was no daylight, for the shutters were closely fastened, and the only illumination came from an incandescent light in a globe of ground glass, still further shaded by a pink shade of delicate and tasteful design, that was unmistakably the work of Cora, and seemed somewhat out of place in a room that was furnished in every way for a man's use.

All kinds of scientific instruments were scattered about the apartment, many of them having a direct bearing upon the business of mining for precious metals, and most of them giving evidence of frequent use. A field glass hung against the wall, in its case, and retorts and graduated glasses showed that chemistry was part of the studies of the owner of the

place. On one side stood a brazier with a crucible on top, and near the closely-shuttered window, with a large cluster of incandescent lamps about it, was a great square writing-table, with many drawers on either side, and a dictionary in its stand close at hand. On the left of the door which Joe had opened was a leather-covered lounge, and on this, with his head near the door, and fast asleep, was Walter Leonard!

The sport, at this discovery, retreated, and he and Waga and Mary all passed back into the hall, to confer.

A few whispered words for Waga, and the Indian, with a nod, dropped upon his knees and crawled into the room, up to the side of the sleeping man.

The superintendent was slumbering soundly, which Joe could easily understand, knowing that he had been up all night, and that he had had an exciting time of it.

Waga, reaching the side of the superintendent, softly, and almost without pressure, passed his hands over the front of Leonard's coat and vest. Then, apparently without any movement on the Indian's part, the coat and vest were open, and the chain that held the piece of gold coin was being pulled gently from inside the collar of the shirt, but which clung close to the slowly-heaving, powerful chest of Walter Leonard.

Mary and Joe were standing at the door watching the proceedings, and wondering what would happen if the superintendent should awake at an inopportune moment.

The Indian was doing his work in a matter-of-fact way, and appeared to be enjoying the experience.

Slowly and cautiously he tugged at the chain until, at last, he had the coin in his hand!

Joe Hamilton's eyes glistened as he saw the prize, and he watched almost breathlessly, as the Indian, with a deft movement, lifted the chain from the sleeper's neck, and over his head, raising his head gently with his fingers to bring the chain loose!

In another instant the piece of coin and chain were safe in the Silver Sport's pocket.

"I will be at your shanty to-night. You need not wait now," he whispered to the redskin. "You can go."

Waga, who seemed to be entirely at the bidding of the sport, went without a word, leaving Silver Joe and Mary looking at the superintendent, while the sport hastily decided what to do next.

CHAPTER XII.

WALTER LEONARD TALKS TOO MUCH.

Silver Joe looked about the room and thought that he should like to examine some of the account books which he saw there, and which he knew might be of use to him in his capacity of detective.

"I have not given much attention to the mine, so far," he mused, as he stepped into the room. "But I have many doubts about you, Walter Leonard, and I should like to be sure that you are not cheating Cora in your management of the Big Strike mine, and which is more hers than yours, although you may think it is not generally known."

Silver Joe was so much taken up in looking over the ledger which he found on the writing-table that he did not notice that Mary Ellis had withdrawn, and that he was alone save for the man still slumbering soundly upon the leather-covered lounge.

He tried the drawers on either side of the table, but they were locked. Calmly the sport drew out a bunch of keys from his pocket and tried the drawers one after the other, but without effect.

"This is a good deal like burglary, I am afraid, but the end must justify the means, and my position as an officer of the law gives me some rights, to say nothing of this."

As he spoke, Silver Joe drew from an inside pocket an official looking paper, which he opened and glanced at hastily before he returned it to his pocket.

"It was a wise thought of mine to bring this," he muttered. "A warrant of search

from the United States court. If Walter Leonard had not thrown himself under suspicion for so many reasons, counterfeiting among them, I could not have procured this warrant. As it is, I can explain to the law if I am discovered, what is something, although not everything, in dealing with a rascal like this."

He put the warrant back into his pocket and then worked at the top drawer with his bent button-hook. Very little work enabled him to get the drawer open, and he almost made an audible exclamation of satisfaction as he saw a rolled-up sheet of tracing paper, on which the red and blue lines could be plainly discerned through the semi-transparent material.

"The plan," he whispered, as he spread it out on the table.

Joe Hamilton understood the technicalities of a draughtsman's work, and soon made out that the superintendent had been working out the position of the treasure buried in the canyon and marking it on the paper. He had evidently not finished the job, but had placed the position of the first man's journey, both the beginning and ending, with a big, lightning-struck tree that Silver Joe knew well, as a point from which to calculate.

"That reduces the work a little, and I suppose the fellow would have worked it all out in course of time."

He bent over the plan, becoming more and more absorbed in his task, when he was suddenly recalled to himself by feeling a hand on his shoulder. Instinctively he drew his revolver, even as he turned, to behold Cora Leonard, who was smiling, in spite of the expression of terror that lurked in her eyes as she looked toward the lounge on which the mine magnate slept.

There was a slight movement on the part of the superintendent, and the girl pulled Silver Joe, as if she would have sent him out of the room.

But an idea had struck the Silver Sport, and he would not move. He looked smilingly into the girl's face, and then whispered a few words into her ear. She hesitated, as if afraid to do what he suggested, but, on his adding something, still in a whisper, she ran behind a screen at the side of the writing-table, and Silver Joe walked boldly up to Walter Leonard and shook him until he awoke.

With an execration the superintendent sprang to his feet, while his hand rested upon the butt of his revolver. Then, as he saw that the sport before him was still smiling, he did not attempt to draw the weapon, but stood waiting for the next move on the part of his visitor.

"It's all right, Mr. Leonard. I found the door open, and came in. Old Margaret let me in down-stairs. I've just been up to the jail, where I have left Dan Whitton. He managed to kill a man during the night. So that gave me an excuse to put him in a place of safety for a while. I look enough like Silver Joe to get into the jail, and I have done Mr. Whitton up in good shape. We'll get his piece of coin and work the treasure, and there will be one less to get a divvy. See?"

"What a cunning devil you are, Cold Deck," asserted Walter, with a smile breaking through the natural sternness of his expression. "I think you will be too much for your double, after all, though Silver Joe is a pretty smart fellow, too."

Silver Joe shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say that he did not think much of Silver Joe's smartness, compared with that of Cold Deck.

"Oh, yes. He is smart," added Leonard, argumentatively. "That cannot be denied. But we are too many for him in this game, sure."

"Oh, sure!" acquiesced Joe, with inward enjoyment of the situation.

"I was tired, but you seem to have more energy than I have," observed the superintendent, "for you are right up to business, without having any sleep."

"Well, when I have business on hand I can do with very little sleep," was the answer. "I want to get this swag, and get out, and I suppose that is about what you mean to do, isn't it?"

Leonard laughed quietly as he answered:

"Cold Deck, you are about the keenest

customer I have come across for a long time, and I find myself giving away things to you that I never thought would pass my lips. I don't mind confessing, since you know all about it, that I am in a pretty tight place here. I have been working the Big Strike mine rather hard for the last year or two, and have dropped more at horse-racing and other games of chance, including one or two cracks at faro and poker in Denver and Chicago than I should if I had been a wise man. Of course, I had to cover my losses somehow, and I am afraid that I have taken about all Cora's share in the mine. There will have to be an accounting soon, under the will of her grandfather—my father and her father's father—and then there will be an explosion. I do not want to get blown to pieces in it, so I shall get out of the way, with this little swag hidden in the canyon—and that also belongs to Cora, if every one had his own—as a sort of nest-egg."

"But what about Cora? I thought you cared as much for her as if she were your own child?" suggested the wary Joe.

"So I do; and I shall send for her when I have got clear away. But self-preservation is the first law of nature. Besides, I am afraid if she knew as much about the way her father died as you do, she would not care so much about me."

"You killed her father, didn't you?" suggested Joe.

The superintendent was now leaning against the table, where the reflection of the pink-shaded lamp fell full upon his face, but his back was toward the screen, with the sport facing it.

As Silver Joe asked the superintendent this question, a pale, horrified face peered from the corner of the screen, and Silver Joe feared that the girl would come right out and listen for the answer. By a scarcely perceptible movement of the hand Silver Joe warned her back, and her pale face was partly withdrawn, as the superintendent, utterly unconscious of the presence of the girl, as he answered, in a deliberate, impressive tone:

"I suppose you may say that I killed Cora's father, because it was done at my orders. You see, he was always a good sort of a man, who made his way with people better than I did. He was what is called a popular man, and I hate popular men. I was never one of them myself."

"So I should think," put in Silver Joe, who felt that he must have some relief for his feelings or burst. "You are not the kind of man that people take to, as a rule."

Leonard frowned slightly, but went on:

"He was my half-brother, and held a big share of this mine, and was disposed to run things in his own way, keeping me in a subordinate position. Well, I couldn't stand that very well. Besides, he had this swag hidden in the canyon. It had been stolen by a gang that I stood in with, but it really belonged to my half-brother, George, who had disposed of a lot of property in Chicago for cash, and was having the specie brought over to him on the coach. Of course, I knew this, and I arranged that there should be a hold-up. See?"

"A nice, brotherly act," observed Joe.

"Yes, wasn't it?" laughed Walter, who seemed to be in a confidential mood, and was revealing his villainy with a freedom that would have seemed impossible to Silver Joe if he had not had so much experience with crooked people that he knew they would do the most outrageously foolish things from their point of view when they happened to be in a certain frame of mind.

"Who was it that killed your half-brother, George Leonard?"

Again the pale face of Cora peeped from the screen, and again Silver Joe directed her to go back.

"Dan Whitton," answered Leonard, carelessly.

"What did he get for the job?"

"One of those pieces of coin that would give him a share in the Fiery Triangle. But I don't think it will do him much good—eh, Cold Deck?"

"Not if I can help it," returned Silver Joe, with the utmost sincerity, as he again

winked warningly at Cora, who had stepped from behind the screen, with a sharp, dagger-like paper-knife in her hand, which she seemed disposed to plunge into the back of the self-confessed murderer of her father.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ALARM.

"Well, we will go down to the jail, and look after Dan," suggested Leonard, as he stretched himself. "But we must have some breakfast first. I'll get old Margaret to serve it at once, and then we will go down to the jail. Come, Cold Deck!"

"No; I want to get down to the jail, and I'll get some breakfast there when Cy Ellis brings it up for the prisoners."

"As you please," said Leonard, carelessly, as he showed Silver Joe out, and, following him, closed the door and turned the key.

Silver Joe, passing out of the house, hurried to the jail with the piece of coin he had taken from Leonard tucked in his hand, as he chuckled over the remarkable way in which he had fooled the superintendent.

He had just reached the turn of the road out of sight of the superintendent's house, and was standing under a spreading maple tree, to put the coin in his pocket-book, when he heard the sound of a horse's hoofs behind him.

In another instant, Cora Leonard, in her blue riding-habit, and with her broad-brimmed riding-hat, with its curling, drooping feather shading her curls, dashed into view, on the back of her black mare Wildeat.

"Silver Joe, I'm going with you," she said, impulsively, as she gave him her little, ungloved hand.

Joe Hamilton was not the man to express surprise, even if he felt it, so he stood at Wildeat's head, and stroked her mane, while the girl went on, feverishly:

"And he stood there and confessed that he was my dear father's murderer! Oh, why didn't I come out and tear him to pieces! I could have done it! To think that he, whom I have trusted and tried to love, should have been such a scoundrel! But it makes no difference now. I must go back to Denver at once, because I cannot possibly live in the same village with him another day. If I did I should do something desperate. I should shoot him, I know."

As she spoke she displayed a pair of revolvers. They were beautiful weapons, with silver barrels and pearl inlaid handles, and were full charged, as Joe saw at a glance.

"They were a present from my dear father, years ago," explained the girl, simply, as she noted the glance of Silver Joe, "and I may have to use them now."

Silver Joe did not answer, for he was thinking. What should he do with this girl, all alone? He was not afraid that he could not protect her from any foe that might appear, but he did not know exactly how he was to care for her until it was time to leave Black Hawk.

"I am going to Denver as soon as I get this matter straightened out," he said, "but I shall have to remain here for at least twenty-four hours, and there will be a hue and cry for you as soon as Leonard finds that you are gone, particularly when he discovers that I have fooled him. He is a suspicious man, anyhow, and he has reason to be, like all men with a crime on their souls."

A panting noise, like that of a large dog, attracted Silver Joe's attention, and he was on the alert in a moment, as he waited for the creature, whatever it was, to come around the bend.

"Margaret, actually," exclaimed Cora, with a glad cry, as she leaped from the back of her mare and ran toward her old nurse.

"What is it, Margaret?" she asked, in the clear tones that she was accustomed to use at all times, but particularly when speaking to her dear nurse.

Margaret was out of breath, but pointed behind her. Cora ran around the curve and laughed. There was the old horse that Margaret had ridden, with a saddle

torn and shapeless, and a rope bridle, and he was coolly munching grass by the wayside, as much at home as if he had been in his own stable.

Pantingly Margaret explained that Leonard had discovered the loss of his piece of coin, and that he was hunting through the house, cursing all the time, and that Margaret had hastily thrown the saddle upon her horse, and rushed after Cora, whom she had seen through the window riding away on Wildeat.

"Then old Sam saw that grass and he wouldn't go any farther," she added, in a wheezy voice, as she pulled viciously at Sam's rope bridle, and brought his meal to an abrupt end temporarily.

While the old woman was making this explanation, Silver Joe was formulating his plans. The two women could be together, at least, for he was sure that Margaret would not stay in Black Hawk if her young protegee were to go away altogether.

"They must go up to Waga's place. That's the only thing," he muttered. "But, where is Waga?"

He had no doubt that the Indian was somewhere in the neighborhood, but, in the mean time, he must go to the jail and get the piece of coin from Dan Whitton, and he knew that it meant trouble if Cold Deck should be there, as he probably was. "Do you know where Waga's place is?" he asked of Cora.

"Up in the mountains. Certainly I do, and Waga is a good Indian. He taught me to ride in the regular Western style, not as they teach it in the riding-school in Denver, and he would do anything for me. He calls me Golden Star."

"You and the old lady go up there, and remain till I come. Will you?"

"I will do anything you tell me to do, Silver Joe," was the girl's quiet answer.

She leaped lightly upon the back of Wildeat, and at the same moment old Margaret climbed into the saddle on Sam, with much more agility than might have been expected. Cora signed to Margaret, and dashed off to the right, to the canyon, with Margaret, on old Sam, making fairly good time behind her.

Detective Joe watched them until they were out of sight around a turn in the canyon; then he pressed on at a rapid stride toward the place in the woods where he knew he should find the jail.

It was a great square place, built partly of stone, and partly formed of the rocky hill against which it was constructed. There was a yard around the building, with walls some fifteen feet high, but more dependence was placed upon the cells than upon the walls. The men imprisoned in this jail were fellows whom it was not safe to trust, even in a yard, and they were seldom allowed outside of their cells, even for an hour.

There were ten cells, and in six of them were confined as nice an assortment of rascals as could be found throughout Colorado. Horse-thieves principally, although there were two prisoners who were awaiting trial for cold-blooded murder.

In front of the row of cells that looked into the yard was the house of the warden, which had a front exit to the outside, and back doors into the prison yard, so that all prisoners were obliged to pass through the warden's home.

Silver Joe walked to the front door and rang a big bell. Before the bell had ceased clanging the warden, a gruff old fellow, who had been an army officer, and who had been placed in this position as a reward for long service, opened a wicket and looked curiously at Silver Joe.

"Hello! Back already?" observed the warden. "I thought you were going down to the village."

"Oho! So Cold Deck is out, eh?" thought Silver Joe. Then, he said aloud: "Yes, I was going down, but I thought I would come back and make sure of my prisoner, Whitton. Is he all right?"

The warden swung open the big door, and as Silver Joe walked carelessly into the warden's office, whose barred windows overlooked the prison yard, he noted that there was an official paper lying open on the warden's desk, which he recognized as

his own commission as marshal of Black Hawk, and which Cold Deck had managed to steal from him at some time—probably in Waga's shanty. Silver Joe soon had his commission safe in his pocket and repeated his question to the warden.

"All right? Why, he is where you put him—in cell No. 10, with the door unlocked. I suppose he is safe there, but I should have preferred to lock him up. I know Whitton's record, and I wouldn't trust him. But, you know best."

"That's just the point, warden. I thought I did a foolish thing in leaving him loose, and that is why I have come back."

"Glad to hear it, Mr. Hamilton. But, of course, now you are in charge here, it is for you to say. I am relieved of all responsibility. Won't you have your breakfast now? You said you would when you came back, and I think it is a pity to let this ham and eggs and coffee spoil. My wife is a good cook."

The garrulous old gentleman opened a door to the right of his office, and showed a nicely-appointed dining-room, with a white tablecloth on the table, and a neat old lady presiding at a silver coffee urn—an unusual luxury in this part of the country, although the superintendent had such things at his comfortable home down the road.

The coffee and ham smelt tempting, and Silver Joe was hungry, now that he had time to think about it, so he required no pressing to sit down at the table with the white-haired old warden and his comfortable-looking wife, and eat a good meal to the exclusion of all other considerations.

The warden talked all through breakfast, and Joe found out that the old jailor had no idea that Cold Deck had cheated him as to his identity, or that the man who now sat at his table was any other than the audacious adventurer who had gone out a short time before, pretending that he was Joseph Hamilton, the new marshal of Black Hawk County.

"I'll get even with you for this, Cold Deck," thought Joe, as he put sugar in his coffee and smiled his thanks to the old lady as she handed him the cream pitcher. "I think your career is nearly at an end. I spared you in Sacramento once, when I should have wiped you out. Now I think I will put you away in the penitentiary for a few years and teach you manners."

As Silver Joe finished his breakfast, with a neat compliment to the old lady for her excellent cooking, and thanks to the warden for his hospitality, he moved toward the office, in which were two barred windows looking into the yard.

With an exclamation of surprise and rage, he drew his two pistols and rushed to the door leading to the yard.

"What's the matter?" cried the warden. "Matter enough!" yelled Silver Joe. "Look!"

The warden ran to the window and looked out. Then, with a shout of excitement as loud as Joe's, he rushed to a closet in the corner of his office, and drew out a Winchester repeating-rifle, fully charged.

CHAPTER XIV.

A HOT TIME.

The instant the warden ran so wildly for his Winchester there was a loud banging at the front door.

"Can't stop for that now," cried the warden, looking at his wife, who had come into the office hurriedly, attracted by the bustle.

She understood his look, and while he unlocked the back door and removed the great chain that was used for extra protection, she fumbled at the fastening of the front door.

The woman was cooler than her husband, or perhaps the fastenings of the front door were less complicated than those of the yard entrance. Whatever the reason, she got her door open first, and Mary Ellis, out of breath and exhausted with running, almost fell into the office, while she pointed eagerly to the door, and signed for it to be closed and fastened.

The old lady obeyed her sign, and then, as the warden got the back door open, a

yelling, as of fiends in desperation, resounded through the yard.

"The prisoners are out!" cried the old lady, her face blanched with terror.

The warden raised his Winchester to his shoulder as Silver Joe leaped from the doorstep into the midst of the shouting wretches, with Dan Whitton at their head, when Mary Ellis, with a cry of horror, caught the warden's arm and threw it up.

"Look out! Don't you see they are pushing him in front of them?" she screamed.

The warden lowered his gun as he saw that Joe Hamilton was a prisoner among the rascals, and that they had pulled his pistols out of his hands, while they ingeniously kept him in front of them, so that any shot fired would be almost certain to hit him instead of them.

Silver Joe was a powerfully-built man, with as much activity as strength, but he could not do anything against seven big and desperate ruffians who cared nothing for the chances they must take in such a struggle.

Most of them would be hanged if they were brought to trial, and they preferred to die in a fight to being strung up on a gallows.

Silver Joe knew that this was their feeling, and as he felt himself borne backward and downward, with Dan Whitton's grinning face close to his, he realized that all his courage and strength would be required to extricate him from his peril.

"Hold him up, boys!" shouted Dan. "Thet thar' old cuss in ther house can't do nothin' with his gun, so long as we stay out hyar, an' we hev' all ther keards in our own hands!"

"Thet be blamed fer a tale!" yelled one of the prisoners, a fellow with big red whiskers almost covering his face, and a cast in his eye that added to the villainous expression of his countenance. "We want ter git out uv this hyar place, an' right quick, too. We air gentlemen, we air, an' we hev' no business in er pen, either in Black Hawk or nowhar' else."

"Wal, git out, ef yer know how ter do it," answered Dan, savagely, as he pinched Joe's arm to warn him to cease struggling. "Ef you kin run this hyar outfit better'n I kin, all right. Ef I am ter carry it through, let me alone. Savey?"

Red Whiskers growled, but did not reply. Dan Whitton had the best of the argument, and so he must wait for developments.

As the seven desperadoes held Joe among them, always with his body between them and the open door, he saw how they had managed to escape. There was an iron bar in one corner of the yard, and the locks were broken off of every one of the six cells occupied by the prisoners. Dan Whitton had used the iron bar for the purpose, and had had no difficulty at all in liberating the men.

"I wonder whether he knows who I am," thought Joe, as he struggled to prevent himself from going to the ground under the feet of the men who held him.

As if Dan Whitton read his conjecture, he hissed in his ear, with his face close to that of the detective: "I know you, Silver Joe! You can't fool me! There's as much difference between you an' Cold Deck in my eyes as between ther mountains an' ther prairie."

"Thanks for the compliment," returned Silver Joe, with a twinkle in his eye.

Dan Whitton turned to the others, and cried in peremptory tones:

"Help me git this hyar cuss inter my cell over thar'. He hez somethin' that he stole, an' I'm goin' ter hev' it afore we go."

The desperadoes dragged Silver Joe back, and it seemed as if they would be able to carry out their purpose to do as they liked with him, when there was a sudden report from a revolver, and a bullet went clean through the big red whiskers of the man who was apparently Dan Whitton's lieutenant.

"Blame my cats! What's thet thar'?" he yelled. "It almost scraped the hide off'n my cheek!"

Joe made a sudden plunge as the shot rang out, and was clear of his captors for a moment. Then Dan Whitton pointed

his own two pistols at the detective's head and yelled "Stop!"

There was not time for hesitation. Joe Hamilton saw Mary Ellis at the open window with a revolver in her hand, and the old warden on the steps trying to point the Winchester at some of the ringleaders in the revolt without hitting him; so he dashed at Whitton, and, with a well-directed blow between the eyes, felled him to the ground, snatching the revolvers from him as he dropped!

The other men were not prepared for such a move on the part of the undaunted detective, and wavered for an instant. But only for an instant.

They closed around Silver Joe and held him in front of them as much as possible, while the Winchester was still pointing at them, but not going off, because the warden did not feel that he should risk the life of so good a man as Silver Joe for the sake of killing two or three horse-thieves.

All this had occupied only a few seconds of time, although it takes some time to tell it, and now the crisis had arrived. Silver Joe knew instinctively that Walter Leonard and Cold Deck would be at the jail almost immediately, and it was necessary, therefore, to be prepared for them.

"They sha'n't come into this building until I am ready to let them come," he muttered. "And I mean to have that piece of coin from Dan Whitton before I go."

Dan Whitton had jumped to his feet and was coming at him open-mouthed, as it were, when Silver Joe pointed his revolver at his head and commanded him to stand back.

"Curse you!" gasped Dan, inarticulate with rage. "I'll do you up ef it kills me!"

"Fire!" commanded Silver Joe to the warden.

"I daren't! I shall perhaps hit you!"

"Never mind! I'll chance that! Fire, I tell you!"

The old warden moved his gun in an uncertain way, and then, as the six men all tried to pull the detective down, two shots rang out—one from the Winchester, and one from Mary Ellis's revolver, and two of Silver Joe's assailants were on the ground.

Dan Whitton rushed in on Silver Joe and seized his two wrists, so that he could not point the revolvers at him.

There were four fellows still left, including the red-whiskered man, besides Dan Whitton; and the warden, encouraged by his first shot, fired again. The result was that a bullet went through Silver Joe's silk hat, which he had kept on all through the fray, and actually cut off a lock of hair from the top of his head.

"Come in on them!" yelled Joe. "Never mind me! I'd rather be shot than let these fellows get away."

The warden rushed down the steps, gun in hand, and Mary Ellis followed with her revolver, that yet had four chambers loaded.

As Mary came down, she caught the eye of Dan Whitton, and he became almost beside himself with rage. With a yell he tore himself away from Silver Joe, leaving the hands of the detective free, and grabbed the arm of Mary.

"You're in it, too, are yer?" he hissed.

"Let me go, Dan Whitton! I've hed enough of you," answered Mary.

Then, with the muzzle of her pistol pressed against his forehead, she forced him back step by step until she had got him into one of the four cells whose locks were not broken, shooting the outside bolt as she did so, and utterly ignoring the cries of rage of Whitton when he found himself trapped and a prisoner, by the woman whom he had supposed he held under perfect control.

Meanwhile Silver Joe had not been idle. None of the prisoners were armed, and the detective forced the four unburt fellows into cells and bolted them in—one of the cells having the red-whiskered man and a companion, and the other lock-ups occupied by one each.

"Whew!" whistled Silver Joe. "That was hot while it lasted."

He and the warden turned their attention to the two injured men on the

ground. One was past human aid, having been shot through the heart, and the other, with a bullet in his leg, could not do any harm for the present.

Joe and the warden carried the wounded man into the little brick building, in the yard, used for a hospital, and made the man as comfortable as possible. Then they locked him in and left him, preparatory to bringing a surgeon from a neighboring village.

Walter Leonard was the man that generally attended to surgical cases in Black Hawk, and it was seldom that a doctor was brought to camp, but it was felt by Silver Joe that it might not be exactly wise to bring the superintendent now, under the present circumstances.

Silver Joe had little time for consideration of these matters, however. He was in this jail for a certain purpose, and that purpose must be carried out without loss of time.

Beckoning to Mary Willis, he told the warden that he wanted to examine his prisoner, Dan Whitton, and instructed the warden not to allow any one to enter the jail premises till he gave orders.

"Not Mr. Leonard, even?" asked the warden.

"Not any one," was the detective's peremptory reply, as he went over to Dan Whitton's cell.

Dan was sitting on the wooden cot in his cell as Silver Joe entered, and did not rise, although his fierce eyes took in the fact that Mary Ellis was behind Joe, and that she held a revolver in her hand.

"Dan Whitton, you have been brought to this place on a charge of murder, by a man who had no official right to attend to the matter. I am marshal of this county, and, as you are here, I intend that you shall stay here."

"I don't care the deuce what I do," growled Dan.

"Very well, then. Give me that coin around your neck."

"What coin?"

Dan said this in a low voice, as if it did not concern him particularly, and as if he would be willing to accede to any request as soon as he understood what it was.

But Mary Ellis was watching him as closely as the detective, and as Whitton arose to his feet and seized an iron bar like that with which he had broken the locks of the cell door, Mary struck his wrist with the heavy barrel of her revolver, and he dropped his bar with a howl of rage.

The sudden attack by the girl had confused him, and Silver Joe had him around the waist and had thrown him heavily in a "backfall" before he knew where he was.

"Thanks, Dan! I thought I'd get it," said Silver Joe, with a mocking smile, as he hastily pushed Mary outside of the cell, and followed her, with the piece of coin dangling by its string, that he had deftly taken from Dan Whitton's neck.

"Er thousand devils!" yelled Dan, as he dashed himself forward.

But he was too late! The barred door was closed and bolted, and Silver Joe was looking into the cell, smiling in his most exasperating manner.

CHAPTER XV.

SILVER JOE'S RUSE.

"Three!" was Silver Joe's triumphant exclamation, as he put the piece of coin with the other two pieces.

"Say, Joe, I think ef you've any good horse sense you'll be er-hunpin' yerself out uv this hyar place jist ez soon ez yer heels'll let yer," interrupted Mary, who was looking toward the front building and listening intently.

"Yes, I know, Mary," answered Joe. "I hear them coming up the road, but we'll be ready for them."

"Do you know how many there are?"

"I do. There's just about the whole village. I can tell the different sounds of their hoof-beats as well as if I'd known them for ten years. It is my business to have sharp ears," carelessly returned Joe, as he put the three pieces of coin into an inside pocket.

"Wal, I'm goin' ter git. I kin hear my dad's horse, an' I suppose he'll hev' Killer Newton with him, an' I don't want them ter find me hyar. They're a suspicious lot, an' they don't care over much fer you."

"Do you mean that they don't like Cold Deck, or Silver Joe?" asked Joe, with a laugh, as he strolled deliberately toward the door of the warden's residence.

"Neither on 'em. They know that Cold Deck is er skin gambler, an' they don't know just what ter make of you."

"You are a good girl, Mary, but you don't know just what job I have on hand, yet. Go up to Waga's shanty in the canyon, and you'll find some one there you know. I'll be up there very soon."

"It's a long way," suggested the girl.

"Not very far. Take your dad's horse."

A tap at the door of the office, and the warden opened it, just as a loud banging at the front door told that the party from down-town had arrived. Mary obeyed a sign from Silver Joe, and slipped into the private room of the warden's wife, and Joe commanded the warden to open the door.

Walter Leonard, his face flushed with passion, followed by Cy Ellis and Killer Newton, marched into the office, and stood in a threatening group around Silver Joe, leaving the door open.

"Well, gentlemen?" remarked Silver Joe, smilingly, in an inquiring tone.

As he spoke he was pleased to see Mary Ellis slip through the doorway, and, lightly as a bird, leap upon the back of her father's horse, that was quietly munching grass at the wayside. A light touch on his neck, and he walked quietly away, with the girl sitting sideways on the saddle, and without attracting the attention of Cy Ellis, who was watching to see how Silver Joe would take the situation.

"Joseph Hamilton, you were in my house an hour ago," spluttered Walter Leonard, almost incoherently.

"Was I?" asked Joe, coolly.

"And I lost a valuable article from my clothing."

"Did you?"

The coolness of the detective was perfectly maddening to the superintendent, and, with a yell of rage, he jumped at the detective—only to face the muzzle of one of Joe's shining revolvers, that was whipped out of his pocket, and pointed at the face of the superintendent in a flash.

"Governor, keep ye'r ha'r on," put in Newton. "You hain't no call ter mind what that thar' young tenderfoot hez ter say. I could hev' laid him out afore his gun was moved from ther holster ef I'd hed er mind. But he don't amount ter nothin', nohow."

For once Silver Joe was taken by surprise. He'd never known Killer Newton to say so many words consecutively before, and he was utterly astonished at what was unprecedented loquacity for him.

Walter Leonard recovered himself almost before Newton began to speak, for he saw that this was no time to resort to force, while Silver Joe was in power, and there was so much doubt as to who could be depended on to stand by him.

Diplomacy was the card to be played now, and, disregarding what Newton had said as being something not worthy of serious consideration, he asked Silver Joe, with stiff politeness.

"Have you a prisoner named Dan Whitton?"

"I have—held on a charge of murder."

"I should like to see him."

"I am sorry for that, because you can't."

Walter Leonard's brow grew dark as night, as he moved forward a little involuntarily, and Silver Joe, who still held his pistol partly raised, clinched it a little tighter.

"Ther fact is, Silver Joe, Walter Leonard, the superintendent of the Big Strike mine, believes ez this hyar Dan Whitton hez stolen er golden coin from him, an' he wants ter find out from him. Surely

ther can't be no harm in lookin' at ther feller, an' examinin' him, in ther presence of ther warden," put in Cy Ellis, in an insinuating tone.

Silver Joe was a man of quick thought, and it occurred to him that he might best further the purpose he had in view, of obtaining all the five pieces of coin that made up the Fiery Triangle, by allowing Walter Leonard to have his way.

He hesitated a few moments, still with his pistol raised, ready to meet any possible outbreak, while the three others from down in the village wondered what would be the outcome of his deliberations.

"Wal, what d'yer say?" asked Newton, impatiently.

"I say that I have the drop on you, Killer Newton," suddenly declared Silver Joe, with a frown, as he turned on Newton, "and if you don't keep your mouth shut when it isn't your put-in, I'll shoot you through your thick head."

"That's right," acquiesced the warden, with a grin of satisfaction, for his old fighting blood was up in the exciting atmosphere of the morning's incidents.

Newton turned quickly, but the warden had his sixteen-shooter Winchester in his hand, ready for business, and there were no demonstrations against the old man. Newton began to think that they had not found things quite as easy as they had expected up at the jail.

"I hev' nothin' ter say," grumbled Newton, half apologetically.

"Of course you haven't." Then, turning to Leonard, Silver Joe continued: "I have no particular objection to your seeing Dan Whitton from the yard, provided the warden is there to hear what you have to say, but Whitton is not to have private conversations with any one while he is in this jail."

"Suppose he should want to engage counsel to defend him?"

Silver Joe laughed.

"No, no, Mr. Leonard. That will not do. What does he want counsel for? The case against him is clear, and, besides, you know there are no lawyers in this village, nor nearer than Denver. There is all kinds of rascality in Colorado, but, so far, we have managed to keep the lawyers corralled in the big cities."

"I have practised law in the course of my life, and I am quite competent to give my friend, Dan Whitton, advice at this time," replied Walter Leonard, stiffly.

"I congratulate you on your friend," was the detective's ironical response. "As I told you before, you may speak to Whitton from the yard, in the presence of the warden and myself."

"Very well. If that is the best, I have no objection," growled Leonard.

"Open the door, warden," commanded Silver Joe, briefly, "and I will stay here, ready for any false move on the part of these gentlemen. You see," he added, to Leonard, "I don't trust you, and I mean to keep the drop on all of you, with my own gun, and that of the two men I brought with me from Denver, and who are both in the next room, with their guns in their hands. I was not quite so much alone as you seemed to think."

Walter Leonard and Killer Newton looked about them, involuntarily. They did not believe that there were others with Joe whom they could not see, but there might have been, and they had a general feeling that this cool, good-humored fellow had somewhat the best of them.

The warden threw open the back door and allowed the three visitors to pass out ahead of him. They walked forward rapidly toward the cell building, when they were brought up short by Silver Joe's peremptory "Halt!"

At about ten feet from Dan Whitton's cell they stood in a line, looking at the caged rascal, who was fuming in his confinement, and trying to understand the situation outside.

"You will keep your faces toward the cells until you are allowed to face this way," said Silver Joe, sternly. "There is a gun covering each of you, with a nervous finger on each hair-trigger. If

you disobey orders you know what to expect."

There was so much mysterious threat conveyed in these words that the three men, reckless as they were, felt that it would be unwise to disregard the warning.

"Now, go ahead and talk."

It was the warden's voice this time, and there was a rattling accompanying it that told the experienced ears of the three men that he had his Winchester in his hand ready for business.

It was not easy to talk thus to order, but there was no help for it, so, with a muttered vow to make it hot for Silver Joe when things changed around, Leonard called out:

"Dan Whitton, are you there?"

"Am I whar'?" growled Whitton. "Whar' in thunder d'yer think I am? Come an' let me out of this hyar cussed place, an' I'll talk ter yer."

"I can't do it now. And you know why," answered Leonard.

As a matter of fact, Whitton did know why. He was facing the office building, and he saw that the warden's gun was pointed straight at Leonard's head, only a few feet away, and that three other guns were sticking out of the windows, although he could not see who were holding them. But Dan was not the man to care for any one else so long as he could get what he wanted for himself.

"Wal, ef yer ain't come ter let me out of this hyar hole, what are yer hyar for? I don't want ter talk ter yer. Ye'r no good."

With these ungracious words, Whitton retreated to the back of his cell, and sat down on his cot bed, where he could not be seen from the outside.

"Dan!" cried Leonard.

No answer.

"Dan!" repeated the superintendent.

Still no answer from the sulky Dan, who was enjoying the superintendent's discomfiture as much as his nature would allow him to enjoy anything.

Bang! A shot from Killer Newton's revolver broke the stillness of the place, and a bullet flattened itself against the stone wall just above Dan Whitton's head.

He jumped to his feet with an oath, and coming to the front of his cell, shook the iron bars in his impotent fury.

"I thought that would fetch him," said Newton, with a quiet chuckle.

"Put that gun in your pocket," commanded the stern voice of the warden, as the hammer of his Winchester clicked, and Newton obeyed instantly. Newton was not without a great deal of courage, but, as he often said himself, he didn't believe in being shot at unless he had a ghost of a show, and he hadn't got that now, with his back to a man covering him with a sixteen-shooter.

"Where's that coin of yours, Dan? That's what I want to know," asked the superintendent, impatiently.

"I haven't got it," grunted Dan.

"You're a liar!"

"It's easy ter call er man er liar when he's barred inter er cell," retorted Dan, with a bitter sarcasm that made the superintendent wince. "Ef I wuz out thar' yer wouldn't dare ter say it."

"You know I would dare to say it," was Leonard's reply. "But I forgot about your having no gun and being in a cell, that's a fact. But where is your coin?"

"I told yer I hev' not got it. Thet cussed Joe Hamilton hez it, an' he's got yours, too, sure ez you're thar', an' I'm hyar."

Involuntarily Walter Leonard turned to see whether Silver Joe was there, and as the same instant the warden's Winchester roared, and crack went a bullet against the iron-barred door of Dan Whitton's cell.

Leonard swung around to his former position facing the cell, and was astonished to see the door fly open, and Dan Whitton leap forth like a suddenly liberated grizzly bear, to which Waga had compared him.

There were two more shots from the Winchester, but Dan was too quick to be hurt. As he broke out of the cell he threw

himself flat upon his face in the yard and the bullets went over him.

Newton had obtained his sobriquet through his quickness of movement, as well as his indomitable courage, and almost as the bang! bang! of the Winchester echoed in the yard, and back from the surrounding mountains, he had sprung backward and dealt the warden a violent blow in the chest with his clinched fist. Then he seized the gun, and, with a dexterous twist, had it out of the old man's hand and was pointing it at his head as he lay on the ground.

Leonard and Cy jumped into the fracas in a moment, and each pointed his revolver at the old man's head too, while Newton turned the Winchester toward the windows and fired half a dozen shots at the places where the people holding the guns would most probably be.

In an instant Newton saw the true situation, as one of the Winchesters, struck by a bullet, tumbled out of the window to the ground.

The guns were dummies!

"Cuss that thar' Silver Joe!" yelled the Killer. "Thar's no one behind them thar' guns. He's just propped 'em up ter make us think he hed er crowd with him, an' he's fooled thar' whole of us!"

Dan leaped to the spot where the gun had fallen, and found, true enough, that the gun was not loaded, and then, as he pulled himself up to the window and looked in, he saw that there was no one in the office except the warden's wife, who was sitting in the warden's office chair, trembling with terror.

The guns had been fixed in the windows as a blind, and Silver Joe had gone!

CHAPTER XVI. THUNDERCLOUD.

As soon as Silver Joe had given permission to Leonard and his two companions he wasted no time in carrying out his scheme.

A hasty word or two with the old lady, and he went to a private cupboard, let into the wall in an ingenious manner, with a sliding panel, so that it could not easily be found by those unacquainted with the place, and brought out three Winchesters that were kept in reserve for emergencies and that had not seen the light for years. With a feather duster he whisked off the dust, and dexterously propped them up at the two windows that looked into the yard at such an angle that there might be supposed to be men behind them, keeping themselves well out of range from possible bullets in the yard.

"Let the warden stand them off as long as he can," he said, hastily, to the old lady as he looked at his own pistols to make sure that they were all right, and involuntarily felt the three precious pieces of gold coin in his pocket to assure himself that he really had them.

"But he may get hurt," objected the old lady, to whom, naturally, the life of her husband was more important than pieces of coin or anything else, and who did not approve the idea of his being left to face all these desperadoes, with no assistance.

"Don't be afraid. They won't hurt him. They will be after me as soon as they find I am gone. But tell him to keep those fellows safely in the cells till I come back. I won't be away more than a few hours."

The old lady was about to say something else in expostulation, but Silver Joe cut her short by leaping upon the back of the great gray horse that stood at the door, and that he recognized at once as the thoroughbred that Walter Leonard used for himself, and that was said to be a wonderful leaper, as well as possessing unusual speed.

"He's a grand horse," muttered Silver Joe, who, like most men of his fearless stamp, admired a good horse above anything in the animal world—except, perhaps, a dog.

He walked the horse to the end of the building, and stood by the side of the high wall and listened, but there were no loud sounds within, because he could not hear anything, and then, with a wave of his hand to the old lady, who was watching him timidly from the window, he dashed

down the road, and up the canyon in the direction of Waga's cabin.

"Go on, Thundercloud," whispered the detective, as he bent over the curved neck of his horse, and whispered into his ear, as if he were actually a human being and could understand the words. He knew the name of the horse, for he had often heard Cora speak of it, and he had been allowed to see it once in Denver, when old Margaret took him to the stable with Cora one day while Leonard was staying with his sister in that city for a day or two.

Silver Joe could not go to Waga's cabin the same way that he had pursued when he first visited the Indian. Thundercloud could go almost anywhere, but he had not arrived at such a stage of athletics that he could climb up the face of a rock. So the detective wound round the canyon, and then suddenly swung to the right through a narrow pass with high walls on either side, which made it gloomy, even at midday.

Thundercloud obeyed the light touch of his bridle, and pushed aside the bushes that partly obscured the entrance to this pass, with the confidence of any thoroughbred animal, who is not afraid of anything so long as it does not actually threaten danger. Moreover, Thundercloud had been up this pass before, with his master on his back, and he knew the way.

"Just as I thought," muttered Joe. "Leonard has been in the habit of paying visits to Waga surreptitiously, probably to get possession of this treasure. A sharp rascal, that Leonard, and I am not through with him yet. I wonder whether I can trust Waga. He is a Sioux, and I don't know."

The next instant Silver Joe dismissed the suspicion as unworthy of himself, as he thought of Waga's devotion to Cora and the way he had helped him (Joe) out of the chasm the day before, when he might so easily have left him to his fate.

He kept his ears open, for though he was pretty certain that Leonard was at the jail still, he did not know where Cold Deck was, and he was a little anxious about that gentleman's whereabouts.

"I must get that piece of gold from him, and then I shall have the whole secret. If I should fail with him, why, I have this plan of Leonard's, and perhaps I might get the treasure even without the use of the Fiery Triangle."

He had not hurried Thundercloud after the first spurt away from the jail. When he turned into the canyon the way led upward, and he was not the man to hurry a horse on an upward path. For a mile he walked Thundercloud along the path, and then, as he saw the opening a little ahead of him, he stopped, and allowed the horse to rest.

"Not tired, are you, Thundercloud?" he whispered.

The horse tossed his head in response to the kindly voice, and munched away at the rank grass that grew at the side of the path and seemed to be left there specially for the delectation of horses, as Thundercloud most likely thought, if he thought at all.

Silver Joe had sunk into a reverie. He was musing over what his life was to be when he had obtained this treasure for the young girl, and whether he would just sink into a commonplace police officer, or whether he would resume his old calling of a professional gambler, or whether, perhaps, he would become the husband of Cora Leonard, and be as happy as some of the business men he knew in Denver, who were in the habit of going to their comfortable, handsome homes in the residence district after their work was done in office or store, forgetting everything in the world outside of the domestic circle.

"Pshaw! I'm a fool!" he muttered. "Such a life is not for me. I suppose I shall keep in detective work, and play a game of cards occasionally as a recreation, but not as business. No; I have given up that, and I guess the only use my skill in cards will be to me will consist in catching some of these skin gamblers, like Cold Deck, who fall into my way, and who make their living by a crooked game."

He gathered up the reins that lay on

Thundercloud's neck, when his quick ear caught a sound that made him sit up in his saddle and caused his right hand to fly swiftly to his revolver.

"Cold Deck," he muttered.

He noticed, with a thrill of pleasure, that his horse had caught the sounds that had attracted his own attention, and he felt a confidence in the intelligence of the animal he bestrode that made him feel the equal of a dozen such rascals as Dick Cole.

"I have just come along," he heard Dick Cole's voice say, with marked distinctness, as a gust of wind blew the sound toward him. "I was at the jail, and when your father had finished his conversation, I borrowed the horse of the warden and came up here to you."

"He has the horse then," muttered Silver Joe, adding mechanically: "What a picturesque liar he is."

He looked over his head, but there was nothing to be seen but the edges of the cliffs on either side, not far above him, for he was near the top, and the mountain top was just above him.

There was a pause, and then he heard Cold Deck say again, as if in answer to a question that was inaudible to Joe: "Of course I am Silver Joe. Do I look like Cold Deck? Well, that is something I can't help."

Another pause, and Cold Deck resumed: "Oh, I don't know. I do not think Cold Deck is a bad fellow. I guess he isn't understood by some people, that's all."

"He's too well understood," muttered Silver Joe, as he urged his horse on to a walk. "That is the worst of it for you, Mr. Cold Deck, as you will find out before I leave Black Hawk."

"Yes, I am going to get this treasure for you to-day. That is my reason for being here," went on Cold Deck's voice. "Where is Waga?"

Silver Joe would have liked to hear the reply to this question, but the sound of Cold Deck's voice ceased altogether now, and the detective cautiously urged Thundercloud up the path, till at last they came so near the level that he could look around.

He saw that there was a wide space at the top of the mountain, with a steep path running zigzag to the right and apparently leading downward to the spot where he knew Waga's cabin was, and where, still farther along, but off to the left, was the cave in the face of the cliff where the detective had come near ending his career by plunging into the chasm down two thousand feet.

Not a sign of human being was to be seen, and Silver Joe rightly conjectured that they had all gone down to Waga's cabin.

"Thundercloud, old boy, I guess I'll leave you here while I go down and reconnoiter," he whispered in the ear of the gray, as he leaped from the saddle and felt at his bridle for a hitching strap. He found it, and fastened it, with a deft twist, to the stump of an old tree that stood conveniently near.

The gray lifted its head, as if to give a whinny, but Silver Joe jumped to him, and caught his nose in his fingers, while he spoke a soothing word that the horse knew meant that he was to be quiet.

"It won't do to say anything now, Thundercloud, even if you do feel friendly to me, which I am glad to see," whispered the detective.

Silver Joe gathered a quantity of grass and piled it in a heap under Thundercloud's nose, so that he would not be likely to tug at his hitching strap and wander off in search of food. Then, something in the horse's eye told him that the intelligent animal was thirsty, and he looked about to find some way of satisfying him.

"I can't expect to find water at this height, and yet, I don't know. Waga must have water, and I never knew an Indian to take much trouble over anything. I should not be surprised to find water handy after all."

Silver Joe was right in his conjecture. A few minutes' search brought him to a mountain rivulet, such as are not uncommon in that wonderful country of Colorado and that make it such a desirable place of settlement for the pioneer who looks for

wealth or a home and the seeker for health.

There was a spring bubbling out of a fissure in the rocks, and it ran down until it settled in a wide pool, overshadowed by trees and bushes, and making a veritable oasis in the desert of great rocks that lay scattered about.

Silver Joe was thirsty himself, and he took a long, refreshing drink ere he led the horse to the spot and allowed him to drink to his heart's content. Then he led him back to the stump and left him there, tied up, to await the outcome of the adventure on which Silver Joe was just entering.

Cautiously making his way down the ravine that led to Waga's cabin, and, listening at every step, the detective, with soft steps, hardly disturbed a morsel of stone or made a bush rustle.

He knew that the one piece of coin that was necessary to the completion of the secret of the Fiery Triangle was in the possession of this man, Cold Deck, who impudently stole Silver Joe's personality whenever it suited his purpose, and who was as dangerous an enemy as could well be found in the whole State of Colorado—or in the country at large, for that matter.

"How do you do?"

Silver Joe jumped behind a great rock at the side of the ravine, pulling out a revolver at the same moment, and tried to recover from the shock that he had experienced by being so suddenly addressed. He was not frightened, but he could not deny that he was startled.

It was only for the barest atom of time, however, for he recognized the voice, and, with a smile, stepped out again into the open of the ravine and held out his hand to old Margaret.

The old lady was so deaf that she could not have heard Silver Joe when he replied to her, although she had been able to distinguish her own voice. If she had not been able to hear herself, she would probably have been unable to speak, one of the scientific facts of physiology being that perfect deafness makes the sufferer dumb too.

Silver Joe did not say anything verbally, however, knowing the old lady's weakness, but he pointed down the ravine significantly and inquiringly.

"Yes, I knew that fellow wasn't you, and I think Cora knows it, too, although she does not say anything. But it is all right. You can go into that redskin's cabin by the back door, and you can capture Cold Deck without any trouble."

"What are you doing here by yourself?" asked Silver Joe in the sign language, with his fingers, which the old lady had learned at one time in her life, before she lost her hearing, and when she little thought that an accomplishment acquired for amusement would ever become useful to her. As for Silver Joe, he had found it a necessity of his business when he was a professional gambler, for crooked players use it sometimes to keep each other informed as to the cards held by partners.

"I am here to find you," answered the old lady, with her fingers, for she realized that perhaps it would hardly be wise to talk aloud when Cold Deck was so near. "I knew you would come right away, because you said so, and I wanted to tell you how things looked."

The old lady's fingers moved so swiftly that they were perfectly dazzling, but the detective's eyes were as sharp as her fingers were active, and he followed every word without the least trouble.

"Then, if that is the case, there is no time to lose," he observed, with his fingers.

The old lady nodded, and then, without another word, verbal or otherwise, hurried down the ravine, with Silver Joe close at her heels!

CHAPTER XVII. THE LAST SECTION.

In a few minutes they came to the spot where Wildcat, with three other horses, was standing in a little niche that might have been made specially for an abiding place for horses. It was sheltered on three sides and over the top by an overhanging rock, and the four horses were standing quietly, without any fastening. Silver Joe

recognized the great horse owned by Cy Ellis, the matter-of-fact, obstinate brute that old Margaret had ridden, and then another horse that he did not know, but that his trained eye told him was a thoroughbred.

He nodded inquiringly at the horse as he turned toward Margaret.

"Cold Deck," she answered, on her fingers.

"I supposed so, but it was as well to be sure. It's a lovely creature, chestnut-brown, and with tremendous speed and staying powers. I wonder how it would come out in a race with Thundercloud?" he thought, as he passed along down the ravine, toward the Indian's shanty.

A sudden turn in the pathway brought him within a few feet of the door, that was tightly closed, but not so that it could prevent the angry tones of Dick Cole penetrating the wood and striking the ears of Silver Joe.

"Oho! So you are throwing off your disguise, are you?" muttered Joe. "Well, I will soon show you that you have no choice but to do so."

Looking at his pistols, and holding one in his right hand, ready for business, he motioned to old Margaret to stand away, and then, with a look of stern determination on his face, stood at the side of the door and uttered the cry of the wolf that was the signal he had used before to attract Waga's attention.

Where Silver Joe stood there was a small chink in the log wall of the cabin, infinitesimally small, but enough for the detective to distinguish part of the form of Cold Deck, recognizable by the dark cloth of his coat, unlike anything to be found in Black Hawk, except on the back of Cold Deck or Silver Joe.

As the detective uttered the wolf-cry, he saw the coat of Cold Deck move hurriedly, just enough to indicate that he had started as he heard the sound.

There was no response from Waga, and Silver Joe, who felt that he must get in, whether Cold Deck was suspicious or not, made the wolf-cry again.

This time Cold Deck's coat did not move and Silver Joe knew that the fact was ominous, as indicating that Cold Deck suspected the presence of an enemy and was prepared for it.

The detective's plan was pretty well formulated. He meant to go into the cabin and kill Cold Deck, if necessary, but anyhow to gain possession of the piece of coin that he had, and which was the only thing needed to give the detective the key to the treasure of the Fiery Triangle.

"If I only knew what position Cora was in I should not care," thought Joe. "But I am afraid she will get hurt in the scrap, unless I am very careful, and I would rather lose a dozen Fiery Triangle treasures than that a hair of her head should be disturbed."

For the third time he uttered his wolf-cry, and then he felt his arms pinioned behind, holding his hand, with a pistol in it, helpless and pointed downward.

With a desperate effort to wrench himself loose, that was futile, however, he managed to look over his shoulder to look at his assailant.

"Waga!"

It was indeed the Indian, who was pressing the detective's arms downward with a grasp of iron, while his dark eyes looked straight into those of Silver Joe with no particular meaning, glittering as they were.

For a moment Silver Joe wondered whether the Indian was drunk, but there was no sign of intoxication either in his expression or the firm hold he maintained on Silver Joe's arms.

"Waga never sleeps," grunted the Indian, sententiously.

"The deuce you don't! What do you do when you're tired?" asked Silver Joe, whose love for a joke could not restrain his tongue, even at this serious crisis.

The Indian took no notice of the retort, but went on, still holding Silver Joe's arms, and, as it seemed to the detective, digging his long fingers deeper into the flesh every second.

"The Silver Chief cried like the wolf of the mountains when it knows the hunter is close upon its trail."

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Silver Joe, impatiently, for the metaphorical speechifying of the Indian always made him weary. "What are you driving at? Have you gone back on me, or what do you mean?"

The Indian released Silver Joe's arms suddenly and stepped back, as he drew himself up to his full height, and looked with an expression of bitter indignation into the face of the detective.

"Waga is faithful to the Silver Chief, and the Chief knows it," he answered, with a touch of injury that was not lost upon the Silver Sport.

The detective held out his hand, but Waga disdained it, as he said: "The Silver Chief will follow Waga's path, and see what is to be done."

"All right," answered the detective, carelessly, for he knew that it would be useless to argue now, and that the best way to reinstate himself in the Indian's good graces would be to obey.

For a few moments the Indian stood quietly looking into the eyes of the detective. Then, after glancing at the door of the cabin, and again at old Margaret, who was at Silver Joe's side, looking with all her eyes although she could not hear anything, he drew from his clothing the piece of gold coin that he had always carried, and that made up the fourth section of the five that would be required to unearth the treasure of the Fiery Triangle.

Silver Joe looked at the scrap of shining yellow metal with an expression that he could not have prevented being wistful, even if he had wished to do so, and there was a flicker about the firm corners of Waga's mouth, as if he might have smiled, had he been anything less than an Indian, with the traditional prejudices of his race against levity.

Without a word, Waga handed the piece of coin to Silver Joe, who in an instant had compared it with the three other pieces, and found that he had the whole coin with the exception of one segment.

"Waga, am I to have this? This is yours, isn't it?"

Waga nodded.

"Did you come out to give me this?"

Another nod.

"You are faithful to me."

"Waga is not a snake, but a lion," answered the Indian, proudly.

"There is one more piece, now, that is in the possession of—"

The detective finished the sentence by nodding toward the cabin.

"Trust Golden Star," observed the Indian, with sententious gravity.

"What do you mean?"

Here old Margaret, who had been watching the lips of the Indian and Silver Joe closely, and who, like many deaf people, could read with considerable accuracy the language of a speaker by the motion of the lips, answered for the Indian, but on her fingers:

"Golden Star has not been idle."

The detective was a sharp-witted fellow, but he could not understand the situation yet, even with old Margaret's explanation, and he looked to the Indian to unravel the tangle in which he found himself.

Waga again thrust his hand into his clothing, and this time drew forth a thin cord, made of wire and silk twisted together, while the detective watched him eagerly.

"What is it?" said Silver Joe, involuntarily, to himself.

The next instant he could hardly repress a loud cry of joy, as he saw, at the end of the cord, the last section of gold coin, that completed the Fiery Triangle mystery.

The Indian placed the coin, cord and all in Silver Joe's hand, and then pointed to the spot where stood the horses.

"No, Waga. I shall not go till I have worked out the scheme, and found the treasure. What would be the use of holding the key, if I didn't use it?"

"Danger! Go to Denver. Bring back many men. Then you can take time, and not fear Cold Deck or the Big Grizzly."

"The Big Grizzly, as you call him, is safe in jail, and as for Cold Deck, I am not afraid of him."

At this moment there was a loud cry of pain in the cabin, and Silver Joe recognized the voice as that of Cora Leonard. With a yell of rage, he dashed against the cabin door, and kicked it open with one mighty plunge at it with his boot-heel.

The sudden giving way of the door caused him to stagger, and he almost fell upon the floor. Before he could recover himself, Cold Deck was upon him, with his fingers on the detective's throat.

Only for one moment, however. Mary Ellis was there, and her blood was up. She tore Cold Deck away, and as the Indian rushed in and took a hand, the assailant of Silver Joe was thrown to the other end of the cabin.

"Well, Dick, I think it would be a good time for you to leave Black Hawk, if I allow you to go," remarked Silver Joe, without any sign of annoyance, for the truth was that his possession of the whole Fiery Triangle secret through the five pieces of gold coin made him feel in a remarkably good humor.

"I shall go if I please," growled Cold Deck, in a surly, threatening tone.

"I don't know about that yet," answered Joe, adding, with sudden fierceness: "And don't try to draw your gun, Dick. If I see your hand get one inch nearer the butt of that revolver of yours, I'll shoot you through the head. You understand?"

Evidently Cold Deck did understand, for he threw up his hands before him in an ostentatious way that made the detective smile.

Silver Joe's pistols were in their holsters, and it appeared as if Cold Deck might have had a chance to draw first. But Silver Joe's marvelous activity was too well known, and Cold Deck was as certain that the detective would have killed him if he had disobeyed as he was that the game of pretending that he was Silver Joe had been made all plain to Cora Leonard.

"Why did the Golden Star cry?" asked the Indian, who had been gazing quietly, but savagely, at Cold Deck.

"I'll tell you," answered Mary Ellis. "He said he had lost some coin, or something of the kind, and he accused Cora of taking it. Then when she told him she hadn't got it, he caught hold of her, and then you came in, and that was all."

"I am glad I was near," answered Silver Joe, gravely.

"It wouldn't have made any difference if you hadn't, 'cept that Cold Deck would not have been alive now," observed Mary, significantly. "I could have reached one of his pistols easy enough, and I'd hev' shot him dead."

Cold Deck laughed, sneeringly.

"May I go?" he asked, looking at Silver Joe.

"Get!" was all that Silver Joe replied.

Cold Deck looked around at each one in the cabin, as if to intimate that he would meet them again at some other time when the cards would be in his own hands, and then stepping over the broken door, that lay on the floor where it had been kicked down by the detective, he marched out into the ravine, and walked swiftly toward the horses.

It was not necessary for Silver Joe to make a sign to the Indian to follow the other sport, and make sure that he took only his own horse. Waga thought of the possibility of Cold Deck stampeding them all, and he kept close on the trail of the discomfited sport.

Hardly had Cold Deck and Waga disappeared, while Cora Leonard placed her hand gratefully in that of the detective, when the click of a horse's hoofs on the hard rocks of the ravine told that Cold Deck was riding away.

"I trust altogether to you, Silver Joe," said Cora, simply, as she looked into the detective's clear eyes.

"You may safely trust to me," he answered. "I am here to try to restore to you your rights, and now that I have the five pieces of coin that contain the key to the Fiery Triangle mystery, I shall go through with my mission in this village, and then, I hope, have the pleasure of escorting you safely to your aunt in Denver."

"And what is to become of me?" asked Mary Ellis, with a smile. "And Margaret?"

"Where I go you both go, Mary. You know that," put in Cora, as she gave her hand to Mary and gently stroked the arm of the old woman.

"Waga, can't we go to this place now? It should not take more than a few hours to find this treasure, now that we know how to look for it."

"It would take a day and a night," answered the Indian, "and there is the Big Grizzly and the Serpent close on our trail."

"Meaning Dan Whitton and Walter Leonard, eh? Well, we will deal with them when we see them."

As he spoke, Silver Joe felt in his pocket to bring forth the five pieces of coin, to see that they fitted all right. Then a look of deep chagrin and horror overspread his face.

The precious bits of gold—the secret of the Fiery Triangle—were gone!

CHAPTER XVIII.

COLD DECK CORNERED.

For a moment Silver Joe stood perfectly dumfounded. Then, as the truth broke upon him, he shouted:

"That rascal picked my pocket when he caught me by the throat. I might have known it."

"How did he do it?" asked Mary, incredulously.

"A man accustomed to handling cards can do anything with his fingers. It is his business to be delicate in touch," answered Silver Joe, impatiently. "But I'll have it back! I'll have it back!"

He leaped over the broken door as he spoke.

"What did he take?" asked Cora.

"The coin—the whole five bits."

Without another word Silver Joe dashed to the spot where the horses stood, and leaped upon the back of the gray.

As he did so a mocking voice high over his head—the voice of Cold Deck—shouted: "Fooled again this time, Silver Joe!"

Joe looked up, but there was nothing to be seen save the tops of the high cliffs sharply defined against the sky, and above them the blue vault of ether, clear and lovely, as it generally is in Colorado.

He shook the bridle of his horse, but a low whinny from the noble animal arrested him, and he muttered: "Wants some more water. Well, he shall have it. The good man is merciful to his beast. And Thundercloud may have some hot work before him."

He dismounted and led Thundercloud to the pool mentioned before, where the eagerness with which the horse drank proved that he was indeed thirsty, and that it would have been cruel to urge him forward without giving him an opportunity to moisten his mouth and throat.

"Ready, now, Thundercloud? Good! Now let me see how quickly you can catch that rascal up there."

The horse bounded forward, and the detective felt the keen pleasure that comes to a man when he sits astride of a horse that he knows is equal to good work.

Hardly had he got into his stride, however, when the click of other hoofs sounded at his flank, and Silver Joe, turning in his saddle, found Cora Leonard, on Wildeat, sweeping along almost at his side.

"Cora?"

"Exactly, Joe!" was the girl's answer.

Neither seemed to notice the familiarity of their speech to each other, for the excitement of a chase occupied all their thoughts, and they cared little for the rules of etiquette that might have pre-

vented a young man and a young woman of comparatively slight acquaintance addressed each other as if they had been brother and sister, or betrothed lovers.

"I'll go with you, Joe," explained the girl, in answer to Silver Joe's inquiring look.

"There may be danger."

"I like danger," answered the girl, simply.

Silver Joe thought Cora had never looked so charming as she made this remark, evidently meaning it. Her blue riding habit fitted tightly to her trim figure, and the natty hat, with its drooping feather, hung over the golden curls, seeming to crown her as a queen of the beautiful West, with all the artificiality of the big cities of civilization swept away.

"Cold Deck will be sure to shoot when we catch him. He is a desperate man, remember."

"I can shoot, too."

The girl displayed one of her pearl and gold-mounted revolvers, that were as deadly in a steady hand as any of the less handsome weapons common among the miners and cowboys among whom she had spent so much of her life. And I am desperate, too. I am going to help you get back that coin that belongs to the Fiery Triangle, if I have to kill Cold Deck with my own hand."

"She's clear grit!" muttered Silver Joe to himself. Then he added, aloud: "You know, Cold Deck is playing his last card, because he knows he will get no mercy from me now."

"I hope not," was all that Cora responded to this.

"Then it's a go!"

Silver Joe touched his heel to Thundercloud as he made this last remark, and the great gray horse understood the hint, although Joe wore no spur, and he dashed up the ravine at a good canter, that would have been a gallop if his rider had not prevented his exerting himself too much.

Wildeat kept up with Thundercloud apparently without effort, and Silver Joe more than once glanced at the pretty black horse with its lovely rider, and thought what a thoroughbred pair they were.

Before long they reached a place where two or three paths diverged, and Silver Joe pulled up to make up his mind which one to follow. He knew that Cold Deck had reached the flat place immediately over the ravine where Waga's cabin stood, but he could not tell which way he had gone after that, and it was important to catch up with him as soon as possible. The men down at the jail—Leonard, Newton, Ellis, and perhaps Dan Whitton—would surely be at Silver Joe's heels soon, and the detective was not inclined to have all the fight over again for the fiery triangle, if he could bring the struggle to a close by catching Cold Deck and taking from him the precious pieces of coin.

Cora soon relieved him of his difficulty. Her eyes were remarkably sharp, and she had been a clever pupil of Waga, who had delighted in showing her how to read "signs" when she had been home from her Denver school for vacations. The Indian had been a great hunter when he lived with his tribe, and, although he had forsaken his Indian people and become a commonplace camp loafer, he had not forgotten the tricks of his youth.

"There is the hoof-mark, Joe," said the girl, pointing to a spot on the grass at the side of the path. "Do you see it?"

Silver Joe was off his horse in a moment, and was closely examining the spot.

"Yes, I see a hoof-mark, but it may be Thundercloud's or Wildeat's, or any of our horses'. It is turned toward the cliff itself, as if the horse had been going to run straight up the wall, and it does not show which way he was going. I am afraid that won't help us much."

Cora was by his side now, attentively looking about in the grass, while Wildeat and Thundercloud, left to themselves, appeared to be whispering to each other,

and comparing notes, like the two people who were so busy a few paces away.

The girl bent down over the grass until her eyes were a few inches away from the dent in the grass and the soft earth at its roots that would have been invisible to almost any one save those who, having been educated in the scarcely perceptible tracks left by passers-by in the Western wilderness, were accustomed to watch for the slightest "sign" that might be left.

"Here is the proof, Joe," suddenly exclaimed Cora, as she looked up at the detective with a gleam of triumph in her eyes. "Do you see this twist in the shoe near the toe? That is different from anything in Black Hawk. In the first place, there are no shoes on any of the horses here except Wildeat, and she was shod in Denver."

"Oho!" whistled Joe.

"Then, I know Wildeat's shoes so well, because I always make it a point to examine them personally before I go out. This shoe was not made in Denver. There is only one place that I know of where such shoes are made, and that is in the town of Roaring Spring, between here and Denver. This horse was shod there."

"That settles it. It is the horse that Cold Deck has. But what is he climbing up the hill for?"

The girl laughed.

"Joe, you are a great detective when you look at only one hoof-mark. This horse may have turned toward the hill for a moment. But, if you look around, you will see that there are other hoof-marks, with the same peculiar twist at the toe, and all pointing straight up this path to the left."

The detective did not make any verbal response. He held out his hand for Cora to step into it in vaulting into her saddle, and then mounting Thundercloud, rode straight up the path to the left, content, in this tacit manner, to show that he had perfect confidence in the girl's judgment.

They had reached the top of the mountain, and were looking about for some signs of Cold Deck, when the girl reined up suddenly, and motioned for Silver Joe to do the same.

"Listen!" she whispered. "Don't you hear him?"

The detective bent his head as he listened with strained attention, but at first could hear nothing. Then his face brightened as he distinguished the measured tap, tap, clippety-clap, clippety-clap of a horse at full gallop.

"Coming nearer!" he muttered. "What is he doing?"

"Don't you know? I thought you were familiar with this part of the country," said Cora, with a smile.

"Not up here on the mountain. I do not often come here at all, and when I do, it has only been to see Waga, so that I have never been as high as this."

Meanwhile the hoof-beats sounded nearer, and then, almost before the detective realized it, Cold Deck came into view around the corner of an immense crag, and bore down directly toward them.

"At last I have you!" shouted the detective, as he galloped to meet the other sport.

Cold Deck had not seen the detective at the first moment, and when he did see him he could not turn his horse.

"Stop!" shouted Silver Joe, flourishing a revolver.

Cold Deck looked at the detective with an expression of the deepest hate, as he swerved his horse to the right, by a vicious tug at the bridle, and bore down, recklessly, toward the edge of the cliff.

The ravine up which they had come was hundreds of feet below, and the gorge was nearly fifteen feet wide. On the other side the mountain ran along till it stopped abruptly at the great canyon, where the valley below was over two thousand feet down. It was the awful chasm down which Silver Joe had plunged when he was caught by the bush and pulled up by Waga.

"What's he going to do?" said Cora, as she watched Cold Deck racing straight toward the ravine.

"Stop, or I'll send a bullet through you!" yelled the detective.

Cold Deck replied with a shout of defiance, as he drew his own revolver and sent a shot in their direction, just in bravado, because he knew the distance was too far for a pistol shot to be effective.

"He must come this way," observed the girl, who had been looking over the ground, and who saw that the only way down from the mountain was by the path that they had come up, and which was so close to them that it would be easy to shoot or capture Cold Deck when he came.

"What a fool I am," laughed Silver Joe. "Of course he must. All we have to do is to wait for him. He found there was no way out over there, and that is why he is riding back."

He pulled up Thundercloud, as Cora also stopped, and the two watched Cold Deck as he rode along toward them, and then stopped, as he saw that he was caught in a regular trap.

Cold Deck stopped, and looked toward the detective and Cora Leonard, who were enjoying his discomfiture.

It was only for an instant, however. Then a dark cloud swept across the brow of Dick Cole, and he leaped from his horse and examined his girths with a care that showed he contemplated a desperate act.

"What does that mean?" muttered the detective.

The question was soon answered, for, having looked carefully at every buckle about his horse, and buttoned his sack coat closely around him, after resuming his saddle, Cold Deck seated himself firmly, and he urged his horse full speed toward the ravine, as if he intended to plunge with him head first down the abyss!

CHAPTER XIX.

A LEAP TO DEATH.

"Great Heavens! Is he going to commit suicide, with the gold coin in his pocket? Confound him! I don't care what he does with himself, but he must not take the secret of the Fiery Triangle with him."

The girl laughed at the earnestness of the detective, in spite of her own excitement and deep interest in the adventure into which she had unexpectedly been drawn. It struck her as ludicrous that the chief trouble of Silver Joe, in the light of a possible tragedy, should be that the pieces of gold should go, too, although, as she admitted to herself, his anxiety was perfectly natural, and he could not be expected to care anything about so treacherous a foe as Cold Deck.

Silver Joe did not notice the girl's amusement, and giving Thundercloud's bridle a twitch that rather surprised him, he dashed away to head off the flying Cold Deck.

Cold Deck was sweeping along, getting nearer and nearer to the edge of the precipice, and it was evident that he intended to go over.

"Stop! You needn't do that!" yelled the detective, who felt, for the moment, as if he could forgive anything provided Cold Deck only stayed on top of the mountain. Silver Joe felt that there would be little chance of his ever getting the pieces of coin if Cold Deck ever went over the cliff, because, even if they were not jolted out of his pocket by the terrible fall, it would take Silver Joe a long time to get around to the spot below, and there were plenty of miners and others who would be likely to come along in the mean time and remove the body.

Then he knew by experience that there would not be much in the way of valuables in the pockets when once the remains had been picked up by the fellows that hung about the camp, unless they were different from most of the lawless men he had met in that region.

To add to his apprehensions, Cold Deck

drew from his pocket the pocket-book that he recognized as his own, and in which he knew the bits of coin were deposited, and waved it triumphantly over his head as he approached the edge of the ravine.

"He is keeping it in his hand, so that when he goes over, everything in it shall be scattered. He's a vindictive brute. I wish I was within range of him."

The detective fingered his revolver as he spoke, but he knew that it would be useless to draw it, because he could not possibly hit the fugitive at that distance.

Cora was close behind him, on Wildcat, and now they drew up together, as they saw that the fateful moment had arrived for Dick Cole, and that, to all appearances, his last few moments had come.

Then it was that Cora, with her quick woman's intuition, saw that Cold Deck did not intend to commit suicide, if he could help it, but was about to take a desperate chance of getting away from his enemy, that would either enable him to triumph or would leave him, a shapeless mass of flesh and bones, on the rocks hundreds of feet below.

"He is going to leap the ravine!" cried Cora.

"Impossible! It is fully fifteen feet across, and the other side is higher than this. No horse in Colorado could do it," responded the detective, almost paralyzed by the audacious courage of the man who would take such terrible risks, even to escape almost certain death behind him—for Cold Deck felt sure that Silver Joe would kill him if he caught him.

"There's a horse that he thinks can do it, anyhow," was Cora's comment, as she kept her eyes fixed upon Cold Deck and his magnificent thoroughbred.

Dick Cole sent his horse flying toward the cliff, and they saw him tighten himself, as it were, for the supreme effort, holding the bridle firmly, and getting ready to "lift" his horse at the leap.

Then, just as the moment arrived when they expected the horse to leap, it swerved and ran toward them, but was pulled up short by Cold Deck before it had gone a dozen yards.

"Good! He won't take it!" chuckled Silver Joe. "The horse had more sense than his rider. Now, Cold Deck, I have got you!"

The detective sat on his horse, smiling. He would not take the trouble to chase after Cold Deck, because, as he had already seen, it would be easier to sit where he was and wait for the other to surrender.

Cold Deck could not hear what Silver Joe was saying, but he had a pretty good idea of the tenor of his remarks, for he shook his head defiantly as he turned his horse straight away from the ravine, and then rushed him at it again.

"I can't help admiring the fellow's pluck," thought Silver Joe, "but I hope he won't go smashing himself down that place, notwithstanding."

Along swept the thoroughbred toward the ravine, and now there was a set determination in Dick Cole's face that told how desperate would be his attempt to carry himself across the yawning depths.

It was all over in an instant. The horse did not refuse it this time. There was a yell of encouragement from Cold Deck, echoed by one of excitement from Silver Joe, a great flash in the air as the brown horse rose, and the next instant he had reached the other side.

"Heavens! He is falling back!" shouted the detective.

Then, as the horse's hind feet scrambled and scraped, and at last got a firm hold on the ground at the very edge of the chasm, Cold Deck took two or three leaps on the other side, and deliberately turned and removed his hat, with a deep, mocking bow to the girl, that included Silver Joe as well. Then he set his horse's head in the other direction, and leisurely walked away, apparently not caring to exert his horse to the extent of even cantering after its terrible exertion.

For a few moments the detective could only sit in his saddle and grind his teeth with vexation, as he saw all his efforts

to obtain the Fiery Triangle secret rendered futile at one leap of the brown thoroughbred bestridden by Cold Deck. By making that leap, Cold Deck had taken all the winning cards out of the hands of the detective, and held them himself, with the undoubted intention of playing them.

"And he's got more than he ever had, blame him! He's got Waga's piece, mine, and the three others, too. Of course the rascal will take everything for himself, and Walter Leonard, Dan Whitton, and the others who were supposed to be his pals in the job will be left as badly as I am. That ought to be a consolation, I suppose, but it isn't."

Silver Joe had been grumbling thus, as he and Cora were slowly walking their horses toward the spot from which Cold Deck had leaped across the abyss, and then it was that a sudden resolve struck the girl. It was evidently the culmination of the reverie into which she had been plunged while the detective was ruminating half-aloud.

"Joe!" she cried, almost exultantly.

"Well?"

"I have a plan."

"Have you?"

The detective looked at her hopefully, for he had the greatest confidence in the sound sense and resources of this young girl.

"Will you follow it if I do?" she asked.

"Of course I will," answered Joe, without the hesitation of a moment. "What is it?"

"We'll leap over there ourselves!"

At first the detective could hardly believe that the girl was in earnest. But a second look at the determined face and the flashing eyes under the long lashes convinced him that Cora Leonard meant to go over that ravine on her black thoroughbred, and that he must go, too, whatever the result.

He looked at Wildcat, and was obliged to confess that the clean-limbed, powerful mare, with her small head, pointed ears, and broad chest, was just such an animal as one would be willing to trust with his life under the awful circumstances that confronted them now.

Strangely enough, he did not trouble himself about his own horse. He knew that Thundercloud was a larger horse than Wildcat, that he possessed tremendous strength, and that he had the points of a good leaper. He did not know whether he was quite as active as Wildcat, but he thought that the gray had somewhat more strength, and that he should be able to take a greater space in his stride than the mare. These considerations came to him almost intuitively, because he was an admirer of horseflesh, and knew the good qualities of a horse at a glance, to say nothing of his having ridden Thundercloud for several hours this morning and having thus had every opportunity to test his excellence. Yes, he had no fear for Thundercloud.

The girl was riding along parallel with the edge of the ravine, and trying to determine which would be the best place for the leap. She was not sure that the spot chosen by Cold Deck could not be improved upon, and she thought that they might just as well have every advantage of locality that could be obtained.

At last she stopped, when she found a place that was perfectly firm to the very edge, and where there was a gentle slope down to it, so that the horses would have this help toward giving them a tremendous impetus for their jump.

Across the ravine she saw that grass grew, but that the earth under it was solid, while soft enough to give the heels of a horse a good purchase when they dug into it.

"Here's where we will go, Silver Joe," she said, in a matter-of-fact way. "I will lead!"

"Very well," was all the detective could say.

Without another word the girl rode Wildcat back from the edge, and Silver Joe saw that Cold Deck was sitting on his horse, with his hand on the back of the saddle, looking curiously at the movements of Silver Joe and Cora. He wondered

what they were about, but he had not the slightest idea that they would try to follow him by the route he had taken, particularly when they had seen what a narrow escape he had had from falling backward down the abyss.

Cora rode back for a hundred yards, and then, bending over Wildcat, seemed to whisper something in her ear. The little mare pricked up her ears and looked straight ahead, as Cora gave her the signal to go.

On they came like the wind, the girl urging the mare with quiet words, and sitting like a statue in the saddle.

One stride! two! three!

"Now, Wildcat!" cried the girl.

With the skill of a cross-country rider or a trained steeplechaser Cora Leonard rose in her saddle as she lifted the mare with the bridle, and before the detective could utter a sound—for his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth—Wildcat and Cora Leonard were on the other side and Cold Deck was racing away at a good hard gallop.

It was a splendid leap! Wildcat was a better mare than the brown thoroughbred ridden by Cold Deck was a horse, if they were to be judged by their performance over this ravine, for Wildcat did not stumble or scramble in the least. She had a foot or two to spare when she got over, and could have covered another three or four feet had it been necessary.

The girl sat watching Silver Joe, and it must be confessed that she felt more anxious about him than she had about herself. She had perfect confidence in Wildcat, but she was not so sure of Thundercloud, great horse as she knew him to be.

"Come, Joe, do you think he can do it?" she asked, with a trembling in her tones that was rather flattering to Joe, or, at least, so Joe thought.

"He has to do it," was the quiet reply.

He rode his big gray away just as Cora had done, and came thundering down toward the precipice, with his heart going almost as rapidly as that of the horse.

Down they came, and then, just as they reached the spot where the detective knew he must make the horse leap, something in the feel of the horse made him turn him quickly to the left, and pull him up as soon as he had recovered from the momentum he had gained.

"What's the matter, Joe?" asked Cora, her anxiety showing in her pale face as well as in her nervous accents.

"Nothing particular, only I felt that he could not take me over, and I stopped in time," answered Silver Joe, coolly.

"Shall you try again? Don't you think it would be better for you to go around and let me keep on the track of Cold Deck? He would not hurt me, now that he has the coin, and I could report to you where he goes and what he does."

The detective did not answer, and the girl saw that she had made a mistake. The flush of mingled indignation and injured pride in the detective's face assured her that she had only wasted her time in making such a suggestion, and he rode Thundercloud back to the old place, to bring him down.

This time he meant to take him over. There could be no doubt about that. Before starting the detective had loosened his feet in the stirrups, so that he could hold on by the ball of the foot, and have more power over the horse than if he sat with his feet shoved well into them, as is the custom with most Western riders.

"Now, Thundercloud, it is death or success this time," he shouted, as the great horse got into his stride, and tore headlong to the fearful chasm.

He did his work beautifully, for he rose at exactly the same spot as Wildcat had done—in fact, his hind feet fitted into the tracks of the mare, and he flew into the air like a monster gray bird.

"Hurrah!" shouted Cora, in the excitement of the moment.

Down came Thundercloud on the other side, his four feet planted firmly on the earth, but, unlike Wildcat, with nothing to spare, for his hind feet were on the very edge.

Then, before Cora could utter another

ery, the earth at the edge of the precipice gave way under the horse's hoofs, and, with a wild struggle to retain his hold, he slid back, and went over and over, to the bottom of the ravine, hundreds of feet below.

CHAPTER XX.

A LYNNING PARTY.

We must return to Walter Leonard, Dan Whitton and the rest of those we left in the jail at Black Hawk.

Their chagrin when they found how neatly they had been fooled by Silver Joe was too deep for words, and they could only look around and think what simpletons they had been to be duped by a transparent trick like this.

It must not be supposed that they spent much time in looking idly about them, however. As soon as the first shock of their disappointment had evaporated, Walter Leonard rushed outside to get his horse and follow the detective.

But here was another surprise. There was only one horse left—and he was not a very hopeful animal. He belonged to Killer Newton, and was the sorriest of all the horses that had come up to the jail. As for the others, Silver Joe had Thundercloud, that belonged to Walter Leonard, and Mary Ellis had taken her father's nag.

"That settles it!" said Leonard. "We hang men for horse stealing in this part of the country, whether they are county marshals or not. I'll have that Silver Joe strung up as soon as I get to him. I have other horses at my house, and we must get them up here. Dan, you hustle down there and bring those two roan mares of mine. You know them? And you know how to get into the stable without a key. Take Newton's horse, and hurry back."

Whitton obeyed without a word. He jumped upon the back of Newton's horse and hustled away, while Leonard, who had allowed the warden to rise, after disarming him, demanded that there should be some breakfast produced.

The warden's wife busied herself in getting coffee and ham ready for her unwelcome guests, and Walter Leonard looked over the jail in the mean time. He realized that this was rather a dangerous proceeding, this taking possession of a public institution, and he knew that his time in Black Hawk must necessarily be short now, because he had reached the end of his tether as superintendent of the Big Strike mine, and on account of the Fiery Triangle treasure, which he found was better known than he had thought.

"Once I play even with that fellow, Silver Joe, and away I go," he muttered. "I know he has told Cora all about that affair of her father's, and my influence is gone with her."

Leonard sighed heavily as this reflection crossed his brain, for he loved Cora more than anything else in the world, except himself, and he had always managed to make himself appear to be a good man to her. But now it was all over, and he felt that she knew his career, and that no matter how kind he might be to her, she could never forget that he was the murderer of her father.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed, as he turned toward the table and attacked his breakfast, with Newton and Cy Ellis on either side of him. "What's the matter with me?" and he ate his breakfast with an air that would have made an observer think that his mind was perfectly free from every kind of trouble.

The three men had finished their breakfast, and the warden produced cigars, with as good a grace as he could, when there was an interruption in the shape of a loud knock at the front door that heralded the entry of Reddy, the bar-tender at Cy Ellis's place, accompanied by Dan Whitton.

"Don't say a word," began Reddy, as soon as he could get his breath, for he had run all the way from the Big Strike saloon. "There's goin' ter be trouble, an' I just run up here ter warn yer. The boys ain't doin' any work ter-day, an'

they are kind of dull, so they've jist made up their minds to come up here and hang Dan Whitton, for amusement."

Dan started and clutched the revolver with which he had taken care to provide himself from the warden's stock of arms as soon as he had gained his liberty from the cell.

"Wal, I'm thinkin' they'll hev' er pleasant time er-hangin' me," he growled. "Whar' air ther skunks? I seed Reddy just down the road a piece, but he hain't told me nothin'."

"Don't be skeered 'bout that thar', Dan. I'll bet they ain't fur away. When ther boys make up tha'r minds fer er little fun uv tha'r kind, they don't calculate ter lose much time. You know tha'r ez well ez any one," remarked Cy Ellis, with a grin.

"No, they won't be here fer er little while, 'cause they are all drinkin' down there, and trying ter work theirselves up ter er proper state of mind, don't you know?" observed Reddy.

Ellis started up in alarm. "What d'yer mean?" he howled. "Air all them tha'r fellers drinkin' my liquors, an' no one ter serve them? Who's takin' tha'r money fer their drinks? What made yer come away?"

"Well, I couldn't help it," returned the bartender, sulkily. "They begun shootin' at er mark at the back of the bar, right behind my head, an' bettin' each other 'bout how near they could come to my ears without hittin' them, an' I got out. I don't get a big enough salary ter take such chances."

"Devil take ye'r ears!" growled Ellis. "What do I keer fer ye'r ears? I'll make yer pay fer every drop of liquor them fellers drink. You hyar me!"

"Blame ye'r liquor! I'm thinkin' 'bout this hyar neck uv mine," put in Dan Whitton, impatiently. "Them fellers will do what they say, ef they take it inter their thick heads, an' I don't want ter stretch hemp fer er feller like Will Buntion. Cuss him! I'd shoot him over ag'in, ef he wuz alive, an' take my chances on everything. I wish I hadn't come back hyar. Ther two roan mares is round tha'r behind some trees, at ther back of ther jail, by the way."

"I believe they're coming," interrupted Reddy, as he listened at the front door, but keeping it locked the while.

Every man started to his feet, and it was evident that, however carelessly Cy Ellis might talk about the probability of Dan Whitton being lynched by the drunken miners, he would not allow it to take place without a fight.

"Git ye'r guns ready, fellers," he said, quietly, "an' you'd better chin ter them, Walter. They'll listen ter you."

Walter looked as if disposed to resent Cy Ellis's familiar way of addressing him, but he did not reply save by a scowl that Ellis did not heed.

"I'll tell yer one thing, though. We can't leave this hyar old gentleman out hyar, or he'll be takin' us in ther rear," continued Cy, pointing to the warden, in whose face could plainly be read a determination to take advantage of any diversion to re-arrest his prisoner, Whitton.

"You're right, Cy. Put him in the cell where he had Whitton," answered Walter Leonard, carelessly.

"Hold on," thundered the warden, as he took his stand in a corner of the room, with a Winchester pointed straight at the superintendent. "I don't go into a cell alive."

"Then you'll go dead," sneered Leonard.

"If I do, I'll leave a dead man or two here," answered the old man. "If any of you make a move toward your weapons, I'll shoot you through the head without further warning. I have the drop on you, and I can fire a rifle as quickly as the next man."

His three assailants stopped in utter surprise. They had not thought of the likelihood of the old man fighting against any determination they might make, and his sudden attitude of defiance staggered them, as the warden went on, in milder but quite as firm tones:

"If you men had any sense, you would know that it is as much to my interest as yours to keep this man out of the hands of the lawless fellows that are after him. Whitton will probably be hanged, as he should be, but not by lynchers. I am responsible for him to the county, and I intend to protect him."

"Wal, warden, I don't agree with you 'bout me goin' ter be hanged, but I'm willin' ter let yer stay out hyar ef you'll take er hand with us against tha'r fellers from down-town," answered Whitton.

There was no time for further conversation, for a noise outside gave token that the crowd had arrived. There was a knock at the door, mingled with the hoarse shouts of men demanding admittance.

The warden took command of things inside, and, peremptorily ordering the others to be quiet, he ran up a ladder concealed in a small closet in the corner of the room, and out through a trap-door to the roof.

"What do you want?" he demanded, as he looked down upon the surging crowd, that was evidently there for business, judging by the display of pistols and knives, that were being flourished in the many sinewy hands.

To his surprise, the answer came in a woman's voice: "We want Dan Whitton."

For an instant the warden could not see just where the woman's voice came from. Then a cotton dress and blue check apron flashed amid the darker clothes of the men, and a tangle of fiery-red hair, in a fluffy mass, bobbed to the front, and Mary Ellis stood looking up defiantly.

"Mary!" exclaimed the warden.

"Yes, Mary," answered the girl, defiantly. "Why not?"

"What have you to do with this trouble?"

"Everything. Whitton killed a good man who had never done him any harm, and I'm with these hyar men ter hang him up ter ther nearest tree. They wuz er-comin' up hyar, an' so wuz I, when I met 'em, an' I'm goin' ter see this hyar thing through. So bring out tha'r Dan Whitton right away, or we'll break down tha'r door. You hyar me?"

Mary's eyes flashed, and she showed that she had a revolver ready for action.

"Well, I won't give up Dan Whitton," answered the warden, coolly. "He's a prisoner, and he's in the hand of the law, and I'll not give him up to be dealt with in a lawless way. Now, you hear me?"

Bang, went Mary's pistol, and a bullet whizzed past the warden's ear, causing him to dodge back out of sight.

"Why didn't yer plug him, Mary?" asked a gruff man at her elbow, in a tone of considerable surprise. "I thought you wuz er better shot than that."

"Did yer?" retorted Mary, contemptuously. "An' don't yer suppose I could hev' sent a bullet clean through him if I'd hed er mind? But I ain't no murderer, an' tha'r old man is only er-doin' his duty. Sides, he's er friend of mine."

The warden went down into the room, and looked in some perplexity at the others, while the roaring and disturbance outside increased.

"Well, Cy, there's your girl out there, among those savages, and she shot at me, too."

"What, my gal, Mary? What d'yer mean?" asked Cy, excitedly, as he ran to the window, and peeped out at one corner, but taking care to keep out of sight of the people outside. There were close bars to the window, and it was high above the street, but there would be nothing to prevent a bullet coming through, if the crowd should take it into its collective head to shoot, and Cy did not wish to take any chances.

"Speak to her, Cy. An' p'raps she will take tha'r crowd away," suggested Killer Newton, who, brave as he was, did not believe in being foolhardy.

"You don't know her," returned Cy, still watching the crowd through the corner of the window. When tha'r gal makes up her mind ter do er thing, you

kin bet she'll see it through, an' it ain't her dad ez kin stop her, either."

Cy Ellis seemed to be a little bit proud of his daughter, notwithstanding that she was with a crowd arrayed against him, and he was particularly struck with the fact that the only shot yet fired had come from Mary's pistol.

"She's mighty slick with her gun, I tell you fellers, an' I taught her, too."

"You didn't teach her very well, Cy, or she would have been able to hit our friend the warden, when he was so close to her, and when he made such a splendid mark for her, on the roof, clearly outlined against the sky," remarked Leonard.

"Don't you fool yourself. She could hev' plugged him right through the third vest button ef she'd er wanted ter. I know what that' gal kin do with er gun. But she ain't no killer, like Newton, Hyar, and she jist wanted ter give ther warden er hint ter git out, I guess."

"Well, speak to her, anyhow, Cy. We don't want to have to kill any of those men out there, to save the life of this fellow, Dan. Still, I can't afford to have Dan hung—at least, not to-day."

Whitton did not seem to approve this flattering remark of Walter Leonard's, and there was a glance at the superintendent from the desperado's eye that seemed to say that he would repay him for the insult when the opportunity arrived.

At this moment there was a crash against the front door that almost shook it from its hinges, and the voice of Mary Ellis could plainly be heard urging the crowd to break it down.

"They have a tree for a battering ram," exclaimed Walter Leonard. "The door will surely give way before long. Isn't there some other way of getting out of this place?"

Without waiting for an answer, Leonard ran out into the yard, and looked at the high wall, while the prisoners in the cells, who knew that something unusual was going on, became restless and shouted to be released, after the manner of prisoners in all jails when they think they might escape in the excitement.

"Over this wall, Dan."

Without waiting for a response, Leonard took a coil of rope that he had observed in the closet where the ladder led to the roof, and throwing the end of it over the wall, till the loop in the end caught in one of the iron spikes that guarded the top.

"Now, Dan," he commanded, "get over, and then wait for me outside. Get around to the horses. You know where they are. I'll join you, and then we'll chase up into the mountains after that confounded fellow Silver Joe. I'll stand by you now, and you must help me to get that fiery triangle treasure. It will make a rich man of you, and you need not care for these fellows then, because you can go away from Black Hawk and live like a gentleman down East."

"Never mind about that. Help me to get out of this," answered Dan, impatiently, as he shinned up the rope that Leonard had fastened for him.

Whitton reached the top, carefully stepped over the cruel iron spikes, which was no easy task, and then, letting the rope down outside, disappeared, just as a shot rang out on the other side of the wall, accompanied by a cry of pain from Dan Whitton, that was half an oath.

"What has happened now, I wonder?" exclaimed Walter Leonard, as he listened for more sounds to explain the situation.

Then there was a rush of angry men into the yard, through the jail office, pushing the warden aside, and hustling to each cell in the yard in turn, to look for the prisoner they were so determined to hang.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN UNSEEN FOE.

As Walter Leonard saw the men, half-drunk and altogether vindictive, break into the jail-yard, he looked for Mary Ellis, but she was not with them.

"Confound that girl! She has interfered with the whole scheme, I am

afraid. I suppose I shall find Dan Whitton, badly shot, lying outside, and I need his help in getting that treasure. That infernal Silver Joe even has my plan of the fiery triangle, so that I have no key to it at all, except the pieces of gold mo-dore. I'm awfully unlucky, lately."

Walter Leonard did not seem to think that Dan Whitton might be unlucky, too, if he had been shot, not did he care, except so far as it affected his own interests.

He saw the men hunting around at the different cells, and heard them declaring that they would hang Dan Whitton as soon as they found him, but as he knew that Dan was not inside, he took but little interest in what they said.

The old warden came out to the yard, and tried to expostulate with the intruders, but they would not listen to him, although they treated him respectfully enough. They knew and liked the old man.

"What do you want, men?" demanded Leonard, raising his voice so that it could be heard high above the din made by the roaring crowd.

"We want Dan Whitton," came from two or three, "and we are going to have him."

"Well, I have no objection, if you can find him," replied Walter Leonard, carelessly, as he strolled out of the jail, and around the corner, to the spot at which he expected to find Mary Ellis and Dan.

Not a sign of either could he see, but he was pleased to notice that one of his roan mares was there. The other had disappeared, and he didn't doubt that Dan Whitton had ridden it away.

"It's all right. I suppose he's gone up into the mountains, and I'll find him up there at Waga's cabin. Then we'll make an end of this foolishness. I wonder what has become of Cold Deck. I don't trust that smooth gentleman altogether, and I should like to know just what kind of game he is playing. The trouble in this world is the utter selfishness of everybody. All these people are struggling for themselves, and not one of them cares whether I get my share of the fiery triangle or not."

With these aggrieved remarks Walter Leonard threw himself into the saddle of the roan mare that stood in the clump of trees, and, with a muttered regret that it was not his favorite thoroughbred, Thundercloud, that he bestrode, he headed for the mountains, while the disappointed cries of the men who were searching in vain for Whitton in the prison, came over the wall distinctly, and made him smile grimly as he galloped away.

In the meantime, what about Dan Whitton and Mary Ellis?

When Dan dropped over the wall by the rope that hung from the spike, he managed to cut the palm of his hand to some extent with the rough surface of the rope, but not enough to disable him. He dropped down sprawling upon the ground as a shot rang out from Mary Ellis's revolver, the bullet cutting the rope just above his head as clean as if it had been done with a sharp knife.

"Cuss yer! What are yer doin'?" spluttered Dan, as he turned over on the ground and looked about him. Then, as he saw Mary, he lay on his side, and pulled out his own weapon. "Fer er dollar, I'd plug yer right through the head, Mary," he howled.

He was lying behind a stump, and the girl saw that she could not possibly hit him, so that when Dan commanded her, in no gentle tones to "Throw up yer hands!" she obeyed, as the wisest thing she could do.

He came toward her, with his pistol pointed straight at her, and she could see that he would fire at her, if she provoked him, as soon as he would at a man.

"Give me them guns of yours," he growled. "No, you needn't take 'em out uv yer belt yerself," he added, as Mary's hands dropped a little. "I'll take 'em."

He drew the revolver that was in the leather belt Mary wore under her apron, and took the other from her uplifted hand. Then he said:

"Wal, Mary Ellis, you're a nice young woman, ain't yer? You've made me wibe out er young man, and now you're tryin' ter kill ther man ez is ter marry yer."

"Don't fool yerself," replied Mary. "I don't marry any such ar'nary skunk ez Dan Whitton ef I remain er old maid fer ther rest of my life."

Dan Whitton looked at her an instant, as if in doubt what reply to make. Then, with a sudden movement, and before Mary could imagine what he meant to do, he leaned forward, and kissed her full upon the lips, with a smack that could have been heard in the prison-yard if there had not been so much noise over there.

Woman-like, Mary forgot all about the fact that Dan Whitton had a revolver pointed at her. She gave him a resounding slap on the cheek that made even more noise than the kiss, as she cried, in a rage:

"You mean, contemptible imitation uv er man! Ef ye ever do er thing like that air ag'in, I'll knock ye'r ugly head off."

"Why? I'm goin' ter marry yer. Ain't I?"

It was a good thing for Dan Whitton that he was on the lookout, or he would have got another slap a great deal harder than the first. As it was, he ducked, and Mary's powerful hand went over his head.

Before she could recover herself, Dan had seized her around the waist, and planted her on the horse upon which she had come back from the mountains—the animal owned by her father, Cy, and which had been quietly munching grass in the clump of trees throughout all the disturbance.

"You'll come with me, Mary. I want yer," said Dan, with a return to his old savage manner. "I'm goin' up inter ther mountains, an' I'm goin' ter kill that thar' Silver Joe. An' I mean ter make you help me."

Mary looked for a moment as if she would rebel. But the thought that perhaps she would be able to find her friend Cora, whom she had missed so mysteriously from Waga's cabin, and which had been the reason of her coming into the town, influenced her to submit to Dan's command, a great deal more than the pistol he pointed at her, and which, in fact, she hardly noticed.

Dan did not care what was her reason, so long as she obeyed him, and as he mounted one of the roan mares, and rode away with Mary by his side, he was contented with the turn affairs had taken.

Mary had expected to find Cora at her home, and it was when she came away from the house, disappointed at finding it entirely empty, that she had met the mob going up the hill from her father's saloon, and, by a sudden impulse, had accompanied them, to make Dan Whitton pay for his murder of Will Bunton, the young man who had danced with Mary at the party in her father's place.

Mary had never confessed that she cared particularly for Will, but when she was away from the peculiar influence that Dan Whitton exerted over her, she felt more interest in the young man than any one else she had ever met. Of one thing she was sure, that she would never marry Dan Whitton of her own choice, although she might do it at the command of her father.

The two rode along without conversation till they were a long way up the mountain, Dan looking behind him at intervals to make sure that they were not pursued, when all at once he paused, and looked anxiously this way and that, for a means of escape.

Somebody was galloping up the ravine behind them, and he knew that it would be impossible to avoid the pursuer, unless he could run faster than they were doing now. Dan's own mare could have done it, but the horse that Mary was riding, which belonged to her father, and which was not a particularly good one at any time, was pretty near dead-beat, as might have been expected, considering the work it had done that day.

"Mary, kin I trust yer with er gun?"

"What d'yer mean?"

"You kin hear ez some one is er comin' up ther mountains after us?"

"Yes."

"Wal, it's some uv ther boys, an' yer knows they want ter string me up, ef they kin catch me."

"I know it," responded Mary, calmly.

"Wal, are yer goin' ter let me be took or will yer take er gun an' stand 'em off by my side?"

"I won't do nothin' of ther kind, Dan Whitton. I wuz with them fellers when they come up ter ther jail fist now, an' I wuz leadin' them on ter tie a rope around yer neck. Do you s'pose I'm er goin' back on 'em now? Not by a jugful. No, you kin fight this thing out yerself. But I'll promise yer this—that I won't help 'em. Now, go ahead, an' marcy on yer."

Mary spoke thus with a ring of determination in her tones that there was no mistaking, and Dan Whitton ground his teeth in rage. Once he raised his pistol as if he would shoot her through the head. But the girl looked at him so fearlessly and calmly that he couldn't bring himself to do it, maddened as he was.

All this took place in a very few minutes, because the canyon was perfectly straight behind them for a quarter of a mile, and almost as soon as they heard the hoof-beats, Dan could see who it was that was coming after them so rapidly.

"It's ther superintendent, after all," muttered Dan, much relieved as he put his revolver back into his belt, and waited for Walter Leonard to come up.

Walter was scowling as he came along, and Dan knew better than to ply him with questions.

"Get along here," commanded Leonard, glancing carelessly at Mary, but not caring to take the trouble to ask what it meant for her and Dan to be riding along together, apparently on amicable terms.

The three rode up the mountain, and in due time arrived at Waga's cabin.

"Stay here, while I go ahead," ordered Walter, gruffly.

He knocked at the door, which had been put in its place again, after being kicked down by Silver Joe, but there was no answer. Then, with an impatient kick, Walter Leonard sent the door into the middle of the cabin, somewhat to his surprise, and followed it.

The cabin was empty!

"What does this mean?" he muttered, as he looked about, and noticed that there were many footmarks on the earthen floor, with its foundation of rock. He explored a little further, and then, with a cry of mingled surprise and rage, sprang upon something that lay glittering in a corner of the cabin, where there was only a single ray of light from a chink in the wooden walls.

It was one of the bits of the golden moidore, that contained the secret of the Fiery Triangle.

"What does this mean?" he repeated, as he turned the morsel of gold over and over in his hand, and saw that it was, beyond all doubt, a bit of the mysterious coin. "I would give something to know which piece this is, and who dropped it. It isn't the piece I had, or that Dan Whitton lost. It must belong either to Silver Joe or to that rascal Cold Deck."

He was leaning forward in the corner again, in the hope of finding more of the coin, when he felt himself grasped in a clutch of iron, and, as the coin was torn from his hands, a rope was passed around him and he was thrown to the ground, a prisoner.

CHAPTER XXII.

ONE PIECE MISSING.

When Thundercloud's feet slipped, and he plunged down the awful chasm, Cora uttered shriek after shriek! She was only a woman, and what woman would not have screamed at seeing a man going down to certain death.

But Silver Joe's time had not come.

It was now that the advantage of his accidental act just before trying the leap saved his life. It will be remembered

that he loosened his feet in the stirrups, so that only the ball of his feet touched them, instead of his whole foot being thrust far into each stirrup, as is the custom with Western riders.

When he felt Thundercloud hesitate on the edge of the cliff, just before he lost his balance, and slipped backward into the canyon, the detective had time to think. It was only for an instant, but at such times an active man can think a good deal in an instant.

Silver Joe knew almost instinctively what was the matter, and he realized that nothing could save Thundercloud. As the horse fell backward, Silver Joe threw himself forward upon Thundercloud's neck, and then, he hardly knew how, he tumbled head over heels, over his head, and clutched at the earth and grass at the edge of the precipice.

He could hear the shriek of the horse as he went down, and could even distinguish the bumps of the body as it struck projections in the canyon ere it fell, with a loud thud, upon the rocks, over two thousand feet below.

Before the horse had more than reached the bottom, a soft, but firm grasp was on Silver Joe's wrist, and, with a struggle, he reached the top of the precipice again, somewhat shaken, but otherwise unhurt.

"Poor Thundercloud!" were his first words, as he stood at the edge of the dizzy chasm, and looked down at the dead body of the noble horse, so far below. "He was deserving of a better fate."

"So were you, Silver Joe. And I'm thankful you avoided it," whispered the girl, who, now that the danger was over, felt more like fainting than she ever had in all her life.

In the distance was Cold Deck, watching them. He had stopped at a good safe distance, when he saw that the two were going to try to leap over the chasm, although he knew that it would have been wiser to go away altogether. They could just see the upper part of the gambler over the edge of the mountain where he had begun to descend, and the sight made Silver Joe more enraged than ever.

Even as they looked, Cold Deck disappeared in a leisurely fashion, apparently satisfied that he had nothing to fear now that the horse had been killed, and the detective had nothing in the way of horse-flesh to help him in the pursuit.

Silver Joe and Cora Leonard looked blankly into each other's faces. It was too bad that, when they were so near success, it should be wrested from them in this fashion. Cora had no doubt that if they could only catch Cold Deck, he would be forced to give up the coins he had at the command of the detective. She did not think of the possibility of the man being able to defeat Silver Joe.

"What are we to do?" asked Cora, for she had no doubt that the detective would hit upon some plan.

"There is nothing for it but to get down to Waga's cabin as quickly as possible. I know that the secret of the Fiery Triangle must be worked out in that immediate neighborhood, and there is no doubt that Cold Deck will go there to use his knowledge right away."

"But he would know that we should be on his trail, and should get there before he could dig it up," objected Cora.

"True. But he can mark the spot, and come at some future time to get the treasure. It would not take him long to work out the scheme of the Fiery Triangle clew, you know, and he is sure to do that while he knows that he possesses the secret.

"But can we get down there in time?"

"Put Wildeat to a canter, and I will show you."

The girl did as the detective bade her, and Wildeat jumped forward at a good swift gait, with the girl wondering what Silver Joe would do.

The detective soon showed her. As Wildeat fell into his stride, Cora found Silver Joe at her side, running with that long, loping gait peculiar to the redman. It was an easy run, and yet covered a great deal of ground. Silver Joe had learned to run in his dealings with Indians, and had taken particular pains to learn their style

of covering the ground. The result was that he could not only run fast, but he could keep it up all day, if necessary.

Wildeat was doing a fast canter, but Silver Joe showed no signs of distress. He kept at the side of the mare, and occasionally looked up into Cora's face with a smile at her surprise that he could keep up with Wildeat without breathing hard, as it seemed to her.

She did not ask him any questions, because it struck her that he might need all his breath for running, without wasting any of it in idle conversation. So she contented herself with admiring his long stride, his head set well back, his lips open a little way, to permit of the easy passage of the air into his lungs, to escape in turn through the dilated nostrils, and she thought the detective was the handsomest specimen of athletic manhood she had ever seen.

They reached the brow of the hill over which they had seen Cold Deck pass, but he was already out of sight. The ravine had many twists in it, and it was not to be supposed that Cold Deck would be in sight.

"How far do you reckon it from Waga's cabin?" asked the detective.

"About half a mile."

"Good. We shall soon be there."

That was all the conversation. Silver Joe looked straight ahead, and settled himself down for a straight run, and Wildeat was getting over the ground in her usual business-like manner, as if she cared nothing for the man at her side, or whether her pace was too fast for him or not. As for the girl, she saw that the detective was equal to the task he had undertaken, and she was not disposed to annoy him with inconsequential chatter.

Steadily the detective ran along at the side of the horse, and a sharp lookout he kept for the proximity of the gambler. That there was a fight ahead of him he had no doubt, and he wanted to be ready for it when it came.

"I am going to have that gold coin," he said to Cora, once, "and I may have to kill Cold Deck to get it."

The girl only nodded. She felt that the determined man at her side had the right to take anything he could from Cold Deck, and to take it in any way he could. She did not want to see Cold Deck killed, but she believed that Silver Joe had the right to kill him to get the coin if it became necessary.

"There he is," exclaimed Silver Joe, as they turned a sharp bend, and there was Cold Deck, standing by the side of his horse near to Waga's cabin.

The gambler had evidently just dismounted, and was going ahead with his arrangements to find the treasure. He had not bargained for Silver Joe's running, and he was not even looking in their direction as they came into view.

"I could kill him from here," muttered Joe, as he saw that the other was actually within range of his revolvers. "I don't know but that it is my duty to do it, too."

He didn't do it, however, but instead, he drew the mare into a niche in the rocky wall that was partly covered by a shrub, and stepped behind it himself. There he could watch the doings of the gambler without being seen.

Silver Joe was looking at a package of paper in which Silver Joe rightly supposed the coin to be, and was turning over the pieces one by one, when suddenly he uttered a cry of rage, and yelled "Gone!"

"What's gone?" exclaimed the detective. "Surely he can't have lost them."

Cold Deck began to search through his pockets with feverish haste, and then he fairly danced with rage.

"What is the matter?" cried Cora, looking at Silver Joe.

Joe returned her look with a stare of blank amazement, and tried to catch what the other was saying. Then he heard him cry, in a hoarse voice: "One of them gone, and the four others are of no use to me! What shall I do?"

"One of them gone! That's what he says!" exclaimed the detective. "Then we are in as bad a fix as ever."

"What is the best thing to be done?"

Cora asked this question more of herself than of Joe, and then she answered it:

"Why, to make sure of what he has, and search for the other, of course."

"Good idea," agreed the detective.

He had stepped forward, intending to bear down on Cold Deck, with his revolver poised at his head, when there was a cloud of dust around Cold Deck as some one sprang from a concealment on the other side of the perplexed gambler and seized him around the waist.

It was Waga!

"Let me go, you infernal red-skinned fool!" yelled Cold Deck.

"Waga's arms are around you, and he owes it to the Silver Chief to keep you down," answered Waga, in the highfalutin style that he affected whenever there was a chance to do it.

"You cussed fool! Let me go!"

"Waga's ears are open, but he will not let his white brother go," answered Waga, with Indian imperturbability.

"That redskin is a funny rascal," observed Silver Joe, who enjoyed the scene so much that he almost forgot how deeply interested he was in the outcome. "He'll hold Cold Deck till I come, I know, if he knows I'm anywhere around."

"Then let us go on," suggested Cora, as she rode her mare out into the open and bore down upon the Indian and his struggling captive, in a few long strides of her gallant mare.

Silver Joe ran by the side of the girl, and had reached the spot as soon as she. Waga and Cold Deck recognized him at the same moment, but his appearance had a widely different effect upon the two men.

Waga felt that his responsibility was over, now that the detective was there, and Cold Deck recognized with equal certainty that the game was up for him, unless succor came soon.

"The Silver Chief will see that I have him in my hands," said Waga, as the detective came up.

"I see it, and it is good," acquiesced the detective.

"What would the Silver Chief have me do with him?" asked the Indian.

"Hold him while I search him."

"Ugh!"

Waga tightened his hold upon Cold Deck, and he had no more chance of getting away than if he had been held in a big vise.

Cora sat on her mare, watching the movements of the detective with the greatest interest.

Silver Joe had no compunction in searching the pockets of his enemy, who was now so completely in his power, and soon fished out the package of gold pieces that Cold Deck had hastily thrust into his pocket at the moment that the Indian had seized him.

With nervous fingers the detective tore open the package and counted the sections of coin—one, two, three, four!

"Where's the other?" he demanded, although he knew well enough that Cold Deck had lost it.

"I don't know," answered Cold Deck, surlily, while he tried again, in vain, to tear himself loose from the muscular grasp of the Indian.

"You will either find that piece of coin or die in your tracks," said the detective, menacingly, as he carefully pointed his pistol straight at Cold Deck's head.

"Shoot, and be blamed!" hissed Cold Deck, desperately.

But the detective did not shoot. He was convinced that the other did not know where the remaining bit of coin was, and it was not Silver Joe's purpose to kill even such a man as Dick Cole in cold blood.

"Put him somewhere in safety, Waga," said Joe, carelessly.

In another moment the Indian had tied a rope around Cold Deck, and led him by a secret path to the very cave that Silver Joe had occupied on the day before, and from which he had taken his terrible headlong plunge down the canyon.

It was not easy to get the gambler into the cave, but Waga knew another way, and he took advantage of it. He led his prisoner to a spot immediately over the

cave, and, brushing away some twigs and grass on which a great boulder had been placed, he revealed an opening through which it was possible to drop a man into the cave, and that offered no possibility of escape, being a great deal too high in the middle of the roof of the cave for an inmate to get out without assistance. There was no necessity for handcutting the prisoner, since the breaking away of the ledge made it impossible for him to escape by the front of the cave, although it afforded him a magnificent view of the surrounding country.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"YOUR MASTER!"

While Waga was away with Cold Deck the detective walked into the cabin, leaving Cora outside. As has been said, the door had been kicked in, and there was nothing to prevent one from stepping inside without making any noise.

The detective had just got inside, and then he stopped, for an interesting proceeding was going on.

In a corner of the room lay Walter Leonard, tied with a rope, and bending over him was Dan Whitton, industriously searching the pockets of the superintendent.

"It's all right, governor," Dan Whitton was saying. "But yer know it is every man fer himself in these hyar days. You didn't mean ter give me any uv ther Fiery Triangle swag, and yer know yer didn't. Now that that redskin hez fixed yer, an' I'm not ther man ter miss my opportunities, you kin bet!"

"You scoundrel! You shall pay for this," growled Leonard.

"That is all right, governor. Talk is cheap, and I don't doubt you'll make it interestin' fer me if yer ever git ther chance. But I don't mean ter give yer no chance. See?"

"What do—"

"What do I mean?" interrupted Whitton. "I'll tell yer. Yer see this hyar knife? Wal, I always keep that for use when it isn't safe ter use er gun. I'm goin' ter wipe yer out. Not 'cause I bear yer any ill-will, don't yer know, but 'cause it wouldn't be safe fer me ter hev' yer live."

Dan said all this in a matter-of-fact way that must have been very pleasant for the helpless man at his feet, while the detective, stealing up behind Dan silently, was not perceived by either of them.

Dan held one piece of coin, with a string attached, in his hand, and, as he found it in his way, he carefully laid it down upon a stool at his side, while he bent over Leonard and deliberately slapped his face in sheer wantonness.

"I like ter git even with fellers that put on frills with me. Yer know, Leonard, that's more'n one reason why I want ter git yer out of ther way. You know too much about me, jist az I know too much about you. You don't fergit that that gal's father what you killed—"

"You lie!" fiercely interrupted Walter Leonard. "It was you that killed him."

"But you made me do it," answered Whitton, coolly. "I hed ter do jist what you told me, 'cause yer seemed ter hev' some sort uv hold on me that I couldn't understand exactly."

"Perhaps I have it now!" hissed Leonard, in a peculiar tone, that was unlike any that he had used before.

The detective saw that Whitton was bending lower and lower toward the superintendent, until their faces were within a few inches of each other, and then Silver Joe, who had been keeping back, to make sure that he was not within Leonard's range of vision, snatched up the precious bit of coin, that made up the five, and withdrew as silently as he had come in, without being noticed by either of the two men, who were looking into each other's eyes in such a remarkable way.

With the speed of triumph, Silver Joe made his way to the spot where he had left Cora.

"Why, Mary, how did you come here?" he asked, in surprise.

"Bin hyar all ther time," answered Mary calmly. "You an' Cora left me an'

old Margaret without sayin' ez much ez good-by, an' what wuz we ter do? I've bin down ter ther' village, though, while you've b'in away, but it wuz only fer er little while. I thought I might find Cora there. When I come back, old Margaret hed gone, an' I couldn't git anything out uv that' fool Indian."

Silver Joe laughed as he thought of Mary or any one else making Waga talk if he didn't want to say anything, and then he told Cora, in a few words, the state of things in the cabin, and that he had the last piece of coin which made up the Fiery Triangle.

"An' if you hev' any sense, you'll hold on ter it now yer hev' it, and git out uv this hyar place afore yer lose it ag'in," suggested Mary. "You've lost it once when yer thought yer hed it, and it'll go ag'in, if yer go a foolin' about hyar."

The detective thought there might be some truth in Mary's words, but now that the game was in his own hands, he was not inclined to give it up without finding out all about it before he went away.

"The question is whether I should take you to Denver now, and come back, with more help, as Waga suggests, or see the thing through now," he said, addressing Cora.

"Why should we go away?" was Cora's response. "We are able to defend ourselves, aren't we? I say that we should work out this Fiery Triangle mystery now, and go to Denver afterward."

This was enough for the detective. He would have done anything the young girl suggested, whether it agreed with his own opinion quite or not.

"Hello, Waga, what's the news?" he asked, as the Indian strolled slowly down from the hill, after his disposal of Cold Deck.

"See, the wise woman," returned Waga, solemnly, pointing in the direction of the cabin, as old Margaret made her appearance, apparently as much at home up here in the mountains after an exceedingly turbulent day of it, as if she had been in her own kitchen down in the superintendent's house.

The old lady went close to Cora, and spoke to her in low, but distinct tones, that were familiar to the girl, and which Margaret knew could always be understood by her pet.

"They are doing some devil's work in there," said the old lady, "and I think the master is at the bottom of it. You know what he did that time to me in the house, when he made me hear as well as you for a few minutes, but left me more deaf than ever when he had finished?"

Cora nodded.

"Well, he's doing something like that now, but he is lying on the ground, and Dan Whitton is leaning over him."

The detective looked inquiringly at the girl, and she returned his glance with one of exceeding gravity.

With one accord they all went toward the cabin, Waga stalking in front, with a heavy club in his hand, and that was his favorite weapon when he felt that he needed a weapon at all. He could use the knife or pistol with deadly dexterity, but the club was more to his taste, unless he desired to kill his enemy, which was seldom the case, now that he had left his tribe and considered himself civilized.

The detective looked again at his five pieces of coin, and put them in his pocket with such care that he had no fear of losing them, for he made up his mind that Cold Deck should not come near him again until the Fiery Triangle treasure was safely in his hands.

As he entered the cabin the detective saw just what he had expected. Walter Leonard had become released from his bonds to a large extent, although not altogether, and Dan Whitton was mechanically untying the knots of the rope and releasing the superintendent as quickly as possible, but in a dreamy manner, as if he were under some strange influence.

Walter Leonard's back was toward the door, and Dan Whitton was turned sideways toward the new-comers. He was looking straight into the face of Walter Leonard, and was breathing in short gasps.

that resounded through the cabin, and gave an impression of mysterious and uncanny conditions that was most oppressing to the onlookers.

Whitton was working away at the knots, and the rope that had bound the legs of the superintendent had dropped to the floor, but his arms were still fastened, so that he could only move his hands from the wrists like fishes' fins.

The use he was making of his hands was peculiar. He was waving them backward and forward before the face of Whitton at intervals, as if to complete some task begun before the others entered the cabin, and it was noticed that whenever he waved his hands in this way, the fingers of Whitton moved faster in unfastening the cords that bound the superintendent.

A sudden thought struck the detective, and he whispered to Waga, Cora and Mary one after another. Then he spoke to Margaret with his fingers. Each one nodded intelligently as Silver Joe spoke to them, and then the detective touched the superintendent on the shoulder, and at the same instant he and Mary Ellis each pointed a pistol at his head on either side of him.

His fierce eyes flashed from one to the other until they rested upon Cora in surprise. He was evidently about to say something to her, when a certain expression in her face warned him that she knew what he had done to make her hate him, and he dropped his eyes before her fearless gaze.

Not a word was spoken until the detective, having looked at Dan Whitton, and seen that he was so thoroughly under the mysterious influence of the superintendent that he was harmless for the present, said to Leonard:

"You will keep that fellow, Whitton, under the influence till I tell you to release him."

"Why?"

"Do as I tell you, and never mind why," answered the detective, sternly. "The time has come when you are in my hands, and I am going to use the hypnotic power you possess over that man to get the treasure of the Fiery Triangle, and then to make him tell something that I want to know."

"And if I refuse, what will you do?" asked Leonard, sneeringly. "Kill me, I suppose?"

"Maybe not," returned the detective, carelessly, as he looked straight into Walter Leonard's eyes.

The superintendent returned the look—fiercely at first, but the fierceness slowly resolved into an expression of abject terror, such as Cora had never seen in him before, as he whispered, hoarsely:

"Who and what are you?"

"Your master!" returned the detective, in cold accents that seemed to cut to the very soul of the cringing man who trembled before him.

CHAPTER XXIV. FOUND AT LAST.

"What am I to do?" asked Walter Leonard, in a humble tone, such as Cora had never heard from his proud lips before.

"Make Dan Whitton dig where you tell him?"

"But I don't know where to dig," remonstrated the superintendent.

From an inner pocket Silver Joe drew the plan he had taken from the room of Walter Leonard the day before, and held it out to him, with the remark:

"Here is your own plan. It will take you a long way toward recovering the Fiery Triangle treasure, and when you have got as far as you can, I will work out the rest. It will save my time and labor."

Leonard looked as if he would object, but the detective passed his hands before the superintendent's face, and there was not another sign of rebellion.

Leonard stepped up to Dan Whitton, who had been standing perfectly still, with his gaze fixed upon the superintendent's face in a vacant stare that was awful to the girl, although the detective only smiled.

A few passes before Whitton's face with his hands, and his arms still fastened to

his sides, and the desperado took a shovel from a corner, and followed Leonard into the open air and up the hill, past the place where the boulder showed the position of the hole in the roof of the cave, to a level piece of ground, where there were many loose rocks, but where there were occasional patches of soft earth that a shovel would easily turn up.

Leonard walked about with apparently no definite aim, Dan Whitton keeping close at his heels, as if he were fastened by an invisible cord to the other man.

"Found it yet, Leonard?" asked Silver Joe, when this performance had been going on for perhaps ten minutes.

The superintendent did not answer, but stopped where a great heap of heavy rocks were piled up under a huge tree, whose branches had been torn and burned off by a lightning flash years before, leaving only a crumbling ruin where once had been a tree in the full flush of health and beauty.

The superintendent touched Whitton on the face, the shoulders, the elbows and the backs of his hands, and then muttered some incoherent words.

The result was almost magical. Dan threw down the spade that he had been carrying on his shoulder, and, with feverish haste, tore at the great rocks in the heap.

They were evidently heavy, but the man tore at them with a set purpose to get them away that made nothing of their weight, and he had lessened the heap by more than half before the three women hardly realized his purpose.

The detective only smiled. He knew that he had things moving his way now, and he was perfectly contented with the aspect of the affairs after all his labor and disappointments.

Dan worked on. At last all the stones had been pulled away, and then, at another sign from Leonard, Dan took the spade and dug. He had turned up two or three shovelfuls of earth, when he brought to light a small triangle, blackened by its being buried in the earth, but evidently of silver. It was not larger than a Masonic charm, such as is worn on watch-chains, and it was of exactly the same shape as Joe had seen in fire in the house of the superintendent.

Leonard stooped and picked up the charm, stopping Dan in his work by a touch on the cheek, that made the man cease his labors as suddenly as if he were operated by clockwork, and had just run down. He was evidently completely under the influence of the superintendent, just as much so as Walter Leonard was subject to Silver Joe. It was a strange instance of hypnotic power possessed to a greater degree by one man than another.

The detective took the triangle from the superintendent, and the article was yielded without the least effort to hold it back, which would not have been the case had Leonard possessed his usual strength of will.

"This the key?" asked the detective, looking straight into the eyes of the superintendent.

"Yes."

"Then set it to work."

He handed the triangle back to Walter Leonard, who placed it on a flat stone, from which he had carefully brushed every atom of dust with his handkerchief, and then stood watching it, while the others looked at him with the deepest interest, except Dan Whitton, who was like a creature of stone or wood, with no speculation in his eye, and apparently no care for what was going on around him.

For five minutes they watched the triangle on the stone, and then Mary Ellis felt as if she must cry out, for the triangle began to turn of its own accord, till one of the points was directed exactly toward Silver Joe, another toward Cora, and the third toward Mary Ellis.

"There," muttered Leonard. "You see that I am shut out. The triangle ignores me."

"Nonsense! Accident, that's all," answered the detective, who wanted to be sure that the superintendent had not made a mistake.

Silver Joe moved slightly, and sent the two young women around, too, keeping his eye on the triangle as he did so.

No sooner had the three people stopped moving than the triangle, after a few preliminary oscillations, began to turn steadily.

"Move again," directed the detective, and the triangle stopped. No sooner had they come to a standstill than the thing began to turn again, with the same steady motion, until the three points were opposite them as before.

Now, the detective, Cora and Mary all felt a strange tingling sensation, and they felt impelled to move in a certain direction toward the high cliff that towered above them on the left.

There was a small pathway that led a little way up the rocks and then stopped when it reached a spot of soft earth, overshadowed by a pine tree. Here the three stopped, and Silver Joe, looking over his shoulder, saw that the superintendent and Dan Whitton were close behind them.

Silver Joe took from his pocket his coins and looked at them. Then he uttered a low cry of satisfaction as he saw that he had reached the starting point from which to find the treasure, for there was a mark on the bark of the tree, covered with grass, that Walter Leonard brushed aside, which corresponded with one on a piece of his gold coin.

"I don't know whether I can trust you," he said, half to himself, as he looked at Walter Leonard, but a second look reassured him. So he made another pass in front of the superintendent's face to complete the hypnotic influence, and then walked two hundred yards in the direction shown him by his piece of coin.

As he walked, all the others followed him, Waga always bringing up the rear, and ready to take action in case of any sign of treachery. It took but a little time to cover the thousand yards, and then Silver Joe found himself standing against the wall of Waga's cabin, with another yard to walk.

Clearly he must go into the cabin.

Waga smiled, as he saw that, after all their searching, the probability was that the secret of the Fiery Triangle was actually in his cabin, and that he had been walking over it all the time he had lived there.

"How is this, Waga? I thought the treasure was buried in the open air, somewhere," remarked the detective, somewhat puzzled.

"Waga built his wigwam after the treasure was put into the earth," explained Waga, briefly, in his Indian fashion. "Waga was not in the secret of the Big Grizzly and his friends."

"Um! That is the truth, of course. Well, we must dig up your floor, Waga."

"The Silver Chief is my brother. What Waga has is his. He can do what he pleases with Waga's lodge."

"Let him dig," commanded Silver Joe, looking at Walter Leonard.

For an instant there was something in Walter Leonard's eye that looked almost like rebellion. The detective saw it, and before the superintendent could recover himself sufficiently to speak, Silver Joe's hand had waved before his face, and the passing suggestion of obstinacy was gone in a flash.

The superintendent turned toward Dan Whitton as obediently as a whipped dog, and, touching him on the shoulders and elbows and hands, as before, said, shortly:

"Dig!"

Like a machine, Dan dug his pick into the hard tramped-down earth of the cabin floor, and, having loosened the surface, put in his spade, and turned up the earth. He had not gone far when he came across huge boulders, that had doubtless rested upon the top of the earth when the treasure was planted, but that had gradually sunk and been covered with the loose earth that had rolled down from the mountains in the great rains that come upon Colorado at certain seasons.

With the same dogged patience as before, Dan Whitton lifted out these boulders and piled them up neatly at the side of the hole he was making. Then he dug again, and at last his spade struck something smooth and hard, and he stood and looked helplessly at the superintendent, as if to know what next he was to do.

Silver Joe pushed Dan and Walter Leonard away from the hole in a rough, off-hand manner and looked into the opening. He saw that a flat stone, fastened with a padlock, lay at the bottom.

"There is the secret of the Fiery Triangle at last," he thought. "How are we to get into it? I forgot all about the keys, and I suppose they have been lost, long ago."

He passed his hands in front of Walter Leonard's eyes again, and said, in a low tone: "Give me the five keys."

Again there was that slight sign of rebellion in the superintendent's eyes, and again the detective placed him still further under the mysterious influence that so few can resist when their master meets them.

Out came a bag that was worn under his clothes, and from it he produced a key.

The detective looked at it, and jumped into the hole. He tried it on each one of the five padlocks in turn, but it would not fit any of them.

"What is this?" demanded the detective, angrily. "Are you trying to fool me?"

"No," answered Walter Leonard, curtly.

"Then where are the keys?"

"There!" replied the superintendent, pointing to the little brass key that Silver Joe held.

Cora had been looking closely at the key, and now said: "That key I have seen once before. It fits some secret cabinet or drawer owned by Walter Leonard, in the cave at the back of his house, and no doubt the keys of the treasure are there."

Walter Leonard nodded to signify that this was the truth, and the detective jumped out of the pit. The keys must be brought at once, but by whom?

"I will go if Walter Leonard will tell me where the place is," said Cora.

The superintendent noticed that she avoided calling him father, and he wined, notwithstanding that the influence of the detective changed his very nature, for the time being. Then he remarked, in a low, passionless voice:

"Old Margaret knows the secret."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Joe. He spoke swiftly to the old woman in the sign language, with his fingers, and she answered him in the same way.

The detective handed her the brass key and she walked out toward the horses. Without hesitation she mounted her own old horse and ambled quietly down the mountain.

As she did so, Dan Whitton suddenly uttered a cry, and, seizing the pick, came at the detective with the weapon upraised and murder in his eye.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE HEART OF THE SECRET.

Silver Joe was an active fellow, and before the pick could descend upon his head he had leaped aside, and, rushing in on the man, caught him by the wrist and bore him backward to the ground.

Walter Leonard, still with his hands bound to his sides, but freer than before, looked as if he were disposed to take a hand in the fight. He had been gradually wriggling out of his bonds, and he could move the most part of his arms by this time, but he had not released himself altogether.

For a second or two they struggled, and then Silver Joe, whose back was toward the doorway, was surprised to hear the sound of many men's voices, and to see Dan Whitton in the hands of Cy Ellis and Reddy, the bartender, who pulled him away from the detective, who held him, while they looked inquiringly at Silver Joe.

"What's ther feller been er-doin'?"

asked Cy, as he gave Whitton a shake. "An' me been er-standin' up fer him, and tryin' my best ter save him from being hanged!"

"What's ther matter, Cy? I thought yer was my friend," growled Dan, looking furtively into the eyes of the other.

"I wuz, ez long ez yer acted squar', but when yer played er dirty trick on me, yer did fer yerself with Cy Ellis. Yer told me ez I wuz ter stand in with yer on that thar' Fiery Triangle business, an' yer sneaked away ter take it all yerself. Howsoever, that's nothin' ter do with it. You killed er blamed good feller when you shot Will Bunton, an' he wuz ter hev' married my gal, and—"

"What?" roared Dan, in a rage. "Married Mary? Why, whar' do I come in?"

"Yer don't come in nowhar', now. I know I favored ye'r soot with Mary, but she didn't cotton ter yer, an' of course I couldn't force ther gal's inclinations. Eh, boys?" he added, appealing to the crowd of half-drunk miners who had accompanied him, and who were looking at Walter Leonard with a threatening gaze that warned him not to take any part in the discussion.

"That's what!" agreed one burly fellow, and then a rope was thrown over Dan Whitton's head, and he was jerked away and down the mountain on a run, with the whole yelling pack at his heels.

The act was so sudden that Silver Joe had no time to interfere, even if he had wished to do so. But his quick wits came to his assistance, and he saw that Walter Leonard had gone with the crowd.

Silver Joe's first thought was of old Margaret, and he was convinced that the superintendent would hasten to his house in the village to head off the old woman and prevent her getting the five keys that might mean so much at this part of the proceedings.

In a few words he told Waga his fears, and the Indian opened the door of the cabin that overhung the canyon, and by which, it will be remembered, Silver Joe had first made his way, and was gone before anything more could be said.

"Good fellow, that," observed the detective, quietly. "He'll stop Leonard if he tries to get down to the village, and I only hope the superintendent will come out of it alive."

He came back into the cabin and looked again at the stone covering of the treasure that was so near to his hand, and yet was so completely out of his reach.

"Now, Cora," he said, as he saw the two girls sitting on a bench watching him, and evidently tired out, as they might well be, "as soon as I get into this box, we must go straight for Denver. I don't feel that it is safe for you to be here. When I know that you and old Margaret are out of this place, I shall feel that I can settle with Dick Cole, and then—"

"Then what?" asked the girl, gently.

"That is for you to say," responded the detective, with a world of meaning in his tones, and the girl said nothing further.

There was nothing to do in the way of getting at the treasure until old Margaret and the Indian returned with the keys, and the three proceeded to investigate Waga's larder. They found materials for a fire, and a rude fireplace, that he evidently used for cooking. There was a coffee pot by its side, and on a shelf they found a loaf, some ham and a quantity of ground coffee and sugar.

"This is delightful," laughed Cora. "It reminds me of a picnic the girls all had at Denver, when we went out into the country, and made coffee in gypsy fashion. Bustle, now! Everybody help. Joe, you cut some of that wood, and light a fire, and Mary, you run to the spring for some water, and we'll soon have some coffee. I like tea at this time in the afternoon, but we must do as well as we can with coffee."

Mary routed out a tin bucket from a corner, and tripped away to the spring, while the detective, seizing a hatchet, had soon splintered enough wood from the heap that the Indian had on hand to light a roaring fire in the stove. It was

pleasant, too, for the sun was going down, and the evening breeze was inclined to be sharp.

Soon the fumes of the coffee arose fragrant in the cabin, and Mary was busy with the ham that was sizzling in a frying pan. When the three at last sat down to supper, at a rude table made of a barrel, with a board nailed to the top, and lighted by the glow of the fire, that Silver Joe replenished from the wood-pile from time to time, Cora thought the experience a delightful one.

As for Joe, he kept his eye on the treasure cave at his feet, and wondered whether it could be possible that his mission at Black Hawk was to be successful, after all.

The supper was hardly disposed of, when the cry of a wolf rang out mournfully on the night air, and Silver Joe, without leaving his seat, answered it in the same way.

"Waga is back," he said, smiling at Cora.

"A good imitation of a wolf, if that is what it is," observed Mary, calmly, as she poured out some more coffee for the detective.

Joe went to the door and looked out. As is the way in the West, the darkness had come on suddenly, and it was pitchy black outside. As he opened the door, letting out a flood of light, the cry of the wolf came again from outside, and he knew that Waga could see the door although the Indian himself was not visible.

"Dangerous thing ter do, Joe," remarked Mary, in a matter-of-fact tone, looking up from her coffee. "If thar' wuz any feller outside thar' ez wanted ter rub yer out, whar' would yer be?"

It seemed as if the girl's words were prophetic, for a shot rang out and echoed back and forth in the canyon, and a bullet pattered harmlessly against the rocks some distance below.

"Some one taking a pop at me," was Silver Joe's quiet remark. "But he's too far away. That bullet had no strength, even when it reached the rocks down there, and I'm perfectly safe here."

Nevertheless, the detective stepped inside of the doorway and partly closed the door, as he uttered the wolf's cry again, and received an answer. He did not see the wisdom of making a mark of himself longer than he was obliged, and this unseen enemy might come nearer, and really do some damage.

There were no more shots, however, and as they sat and stood waiting, Waga climbed up from the darkness, and, without a word, handed five keys to the detective.

"Where is Margaret?" asked the detective, as he took the keys, with a thrill of pleasure as he noted that they were all of a queer pattern, with an Oriental suggestiveness in their crescent-shaped wards and the ornativeness of their manufacturer in general.

"The wise woman comes by the ravine," answered the Indian sententiously. "She cannot climb, but she comes by the other path, in silence."

Waga attacked the ham and coffee set before him without betraying any surprise that the meal was all prepared, and apparently feeling no interest save in what he was doing at the moment, trying to recuperate himself after the fatigue of his trip to the village afoot.

"I suppose old Margaret is coming in silence," laughed Joe. "It would not be like her to come in any other way. I should think Waga intended to be facetious if I didn't know that he has no more idea of humor that the coffee he is drinking."

"Here's Margaret," exclaimed Cora, who had gone to the doorway, where the broken door was lying on the ground, and had been trying to distinguish the objects outside. "I can hear the footsteps of that old horse of hers. I would know it among a thousand."

Joe went out hastily, and ran down the mountain to meet the old lady, who contented herself with asking in her peculiar voice: "Has he come back?"

"Yes," shouted the detective, in her ear,

for it was too dark to talk with the fingers, and the old lady said no more.

"Now for the treasure of the Fiery Triangle," said the detective, as he jumped into the hole, with Waga, Cora, Mary, and Margaret all grouped around him.

The fire in the stove had been replenished by the Indian, and lighted up the room, but the hole was in deep shadow. Silver Joe's ever-useful cigar-lighter was brought into use, and, by its light, he tried one of the keys on the first padlock. After two or three trials to find the right key for the right padlock, the first lock was turned and a padlock thrown aside.

"One!" exclaimed the detective.

One after another he worked at the padlocks, until soon he had four of the padlocks lying on the ground, and there was only one more to be opened.

Somehow, that last padlock was very hard. It seemed to be more rusty than the others, and the key would not fit it. Again and again he tried, blowing into the barrel of the key, and stooping down to blow into the padlock, in the hope of displacing any loose dust that might be there.

"Confound it! Am I to be beaten at the last moment?" he muttered.

He was getting mad, and tugged at the padlock and tried to force it open without the key at all, while the three women looked on anxiously, and the Indian stalked to the table for another piece of ham and bread.

All at once, just as Silver Joe gave a particularly vicious tug at the padlock, it broke open, and the detective fell back with the force of his own pull.

To rush forward and lift at the stone lid of the cave was the work of a moment.

"Waga!"

"Ugh!" grunted Waga.

"Help me to lift this."

The Indian stepped into the hole, and, with a mighty effort, the two men displaced the stone, and revealed an opening beneath. It was not merely a box, as the detective had supposed, but a cave that led off in a sidelong way out of sight.

With his flaring cigar-lighter in his hand the detective crawled into the passage, for it was not large enough for him to enter it in any way save on his hands and knees, and in a few minutes came out, dragging a large iron box such as is used by Express companies for the conveyance of precious articles and money.

As he brought it into view he was pleased to see that the lock had been broken off, and there was nothing to interfere with its being directly opened.

Up went the lid, and then the detective saw—an empty box!

CHAPTER XXVI.

RASCALS IN COUNCIL.

For a moment he could not say a word in his bitter disappointment.

Was it for this that he had risked his life a dozen times, that he had dragged the young girl at his side, into all kinds of adventures, that he had sworn to follow the secret of the Fiery Triangle to its bitter end?

Silver Joe was not easily cast down, but now he sat on the edge of the hole that had hidden the secret of the Fiery Triangle, and everything seemed to swim around him.

Cora shared his deep disappointment, but, in justice to her, it must be said, that the disappointment of the detective was her chief cause of regret.

Waga was the only one who seemed to care nothing about it, and who was perfectly self-possessed. He had finished his supper now, and was quietly filling his pipe with tobacco. He lighted it and puffed away until he was sure that it was going. Then he got another pipe, filled it with tobacco and handed it to the detective.

Joe looked inquiringly at Cora, who answered, with a bright smile:

"You know I like the smell of tobacco, and I know that Margaret and Mary do not mind it. Smoke, Joe. It may help you to think."

Joe did as he was told, and, using his cigar-lighter, soon had his pipe going. He seemed to have lost his ambition for the

present, and to desire nothing but to sit and smoke, and wish that he had never heard of the Fiery Triangle.

Waga finished his pipe—smoked it to the very bottom—and then, without a word, dropped into the hole and crawled into the tunnel.

"What is he going to do?" said Mary.

"Wait!" put in old Margaret, on her fingers. She had been watching the Indian curiously while he was smoking, and it had occurred to her that Waga was not so idle as he appeared to be. She rightly conjectured that his brain was hard at work.

Waga was out of sight only a few moments, and when he came back he brought with him a large leather mail-bag, with the fastening broken, in the same manner as the box that had been revealed by the detective.

Waga lifted the bag out of the hole and laid it on the floor. Then he picked up the broken door and fastened it in its place, with the barrel and board that formed the table jammed tightly against it.

The detective picked up the bag and thrust his hand into it.

"At last!" he shouted.

He brought out a small leather bag, and, clearing a space on the floor, where the light of the fire fell full upon it, he poured out the contents of the bag.

Jewels of all kinds! Diamonds of extraordinary size and beauty, reflecting a hundred hues in the firelight, rubies of blood red, dazzling in their sparkling loveliness; deep-ground emeralds, sapphires, pearls, opals—treasure worth a king's ransom!

"The treasure of the Fiery Triangle!" he exclaimed, as he allowed the gems to run through his fingers like water. "Now, Cora Leonard, I have reached what I came for."

He put the gems back into the chamois-leather bag and handed them to Cora. Then he searched the bag again, and brought forth a bundle of legal papers that he recognized as the certificates of ownership in the Big Strike mines, in the name of William Leonard, Cora's father.

Again he searched, and this time a bag like the other, with even more precious stones, came forth. Then he turned the bag upside down, to make sure that it was indeed empty, and, looking at Waga, with a smile of intense happiness, he said:

"Waga, let us have a pipe."

But the Indian did not answer. He was listening. With a quick, stealthy step Waga reached the door of the cabin—the door that was broken—and then, coming back hurriedly, pointed to the other door that led down the rocks.

"Leonard is coming. You must go this way," he said.

Hastily disposing of the second chamois bag about his clothing, and seeing that Cora had the other bag in her pocket, the detective opened the other door that led down the rocks, and looked inquiringly at the Indian.

How were the women to be got down the rocks. It was a question that he could not answer. But he knew that the Indian would not warn him without good reason, and that Leonard was not alone. Because if he were, the detective would have been able to control him easily enough.

Waga brought forth a strong rope from his secret stores, and fastened one end to a spike driven into the cabin floor, immediately behind the door, and which had escaped Joe's observation hitherto. To this spike the Indian fastened the end of the rope, and allowed the other to trail down.

Joe understood the object of it, and, with a few whispered words of explanation to Cora, he seized the rope and let himself down. The way was rugged, and a false step would have been likely to hurl the climber into the canyon, if it were not for the rope, and Silver Joe understood that the rope was intended as a measure of safety, and not for the party to use as a means of descent alone.

Waga stayed in the cabin till the last, while Cora, Mary, and old Margaret were each in turn assisted down, and placed on a ledge below, whence they could easily regain the mountain path up which the de-

tective had traveled the day before on his first visit to Waga's cabin.

When it came to Waga's turn to come down he took off the rope, and threw it down to the detective. He was as sure-footed as an elk, and needed no assistance from a rope to reach the lower level. Besides, he knew the way thoroughly, and had that advantage over even Silver Joe.

Hardly had the party got out of the cabin and clear away, when the broken door fell with a crash, and Walter Leonard and Cy Ellis, with Reddy and Killer Newton behind them, and a rabble at their heels, entered the cabin and looked about.

Leonard saw the hole in the middle of the cabin, and, with a cry of rage, jumped into it, and crawled into the little tunnel. As he came out his face was distorted with passion.

"Gone!" he yelled. "That cussed Silver Joe has got away with the treasure, and he has taken my daughter with him—and yours, too, Cy," he added, as he thought of a way to stir up the wrath of his one-eyed companion.

"He hez, eh?" cried Cy, "an' I thought when I helped ter swing that rascal, Dan Whitton, ter a tree, that she'd be obedient ter me ag'in, like she used ter be."

"Ther best thing ter do is ter go after her," yelled Killer Newton, who was almost as excited as Cy Ellis. "I'm with yer, Cy!"

He held out his hand, and Cy grasped it effusively as he said:

"Yer know, Killer, I've promised Mary ter yer. She'll make er blamed good wife fer yer, an' she won't go empty-handed. But ye hev' ter help me catch her."

"Where can they have gone?" muttered Walter Leonard, who was looking in vain for some vestige of the treasure that he would have risked so much to possess. "They must have gone over this way, but I don't see how they could have done it without breaking their necks."

"We kin meet them round the other way, if they hev'," suggested Cy. "We hev' horses, and they hev'n't, which is one point in our favor, anyhow."

Walter Leonard saw the force of this argument, and the crowd left the cabin as suddenly as they had entered it.

Some had horses and some had not. Walter Leonard found Willet, and he took her with the feeling that he was most decidedly on his own property, while Reddy took the old nag that belonged to Margaret, but deserted him when he found that the animal was completely tired out, and as obstinate as the old woman herself.

The horse would not budge an inch in spite of all that Reddy could do or say. So, with a parting kick, that had not the least effect upon the horse, he ran after the crowd, that had got some distance down the ravine and made up his mind to walk.

Walter Leonard, by some means best known to himself, but that was undoubtedly traceable in a greater or less degree to his hypnotic influence, had got all these men to feel that they must obey him, and he was determined to use his power to the utmost.

He must have that Triangle treasure at all hazards, and he must prevent Cora going to Denver at this time. When she went to Denver it must be with him, or after he had found means to escape from this part of the country, with the treasure of the Fiery Triangle safe in his possession. He had staked a great deal on this game, and he did not mean to lose it now, if he could help himself.

Down the ravine went the motley crew, until they reached a bend in the road, when they all stopped as if by common consent, although no word was spoken.

The moon had come out and cast a fitful glow upon some object over their heads toward which each man turned his eyes.

What was that object, swinging just below the withered branches of a lightning-blasted tree? Why did the men look at it from every side, with a stern glance that told nothing of remorse or pity, but only of curiosity?

The object was perfectly still, save that it swayed a little in the night breeze, and it was evidently beyond the power of do-

ing harm. Yet there was not one in all that desperate band that would have stood there alone at night, and every man felt that it was not a pleasant spot even now, with all the crowd present, and giving that protection that is always felt in numbers.

The object was the dead body of Dan Whitton.

He had paid the full penalty for the murder of Will Bunton at the dance, and he had paid it without the intervention of any law save that which bears the name of Judge Lynch. He had been hanged to this tree by the men that were now looking at his body, and they had done their work thoroughly.

Dan Whitton would never trouble any one on earth again, and his body would remain where it was till some one saw fit to bury it, or until the carrion birds took it away bit by bit.

The crowd reached the village, still without seeing anything of those they pursued, and Walter Leonard, discomfited, and in a towering passion, went with the rest down to Cy Ellis's saloon to make up his next plan.

The gang of miners cared for little when once they got into the saloon save to drink and gamble, and Reddy was soon busy serving them with whisky, while Leonard, Cy Ellis and Killer Newton retired to Ellis's bedroom and discussed the situation. What was the result of that discussion will be seen later.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DEVIL'S CANYON.

It was about an hour before the moment that the daylight would break through the pitch darkness of the east that three women and a man stood a little distance from the small station on a branch of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. They were gathered under the lee of a water-tank, and from their position they could distinguish the one feeble light in the station, which was telegraph office, ticket office, and signal box all in one.

The three women and the man were Cora, Mary, old Margaret and Joe, the detective.

"That freight will be along at 3:10," observed Silver Joe, in a low voice, as he brought forth his watch from an inner pocket, and, opening the glass, felt the position of the hands. "It is three o'clock now, and we have ten minutes to wait. The engine will take water here, and while that is going on I must arrange to get you all aboard the train."

He uttered the low wolf's cry now, and almost immediately the response came, and before the echo had entirely died away the Indian was at his side.

"Well, Waga?"

"Good!"

"The agent in the station?"

"Ugh!"

The detective understood this grunt to be an affirmative, and he asked:

"Did he see you?"

"No."

"You can read the telegraphic language, can't you?"

"Ugh!"

"Train on time?"

"On time. I stood outside the door, and the ticker said the train come now," answered the Indian, as he stepped out upon the track, and, kneeling down, placed his ear to one of the rails.

"Well?" asked the detective.

"Coming fast," answered Waga, rising to his feet.

"Good! You know what to do in case any of those fellows should come before we get on the train?"

"The Indian drew his knife and tried the edge on his forefinger, and the detective needed no farther answer.

He placed the three women behind the tank, and retired to that position to wait for the approach of the train. Soon it came roaring up the track, a long streak of white light being thrown upon the rails in front, and the locked wheels, as the brakes were applied, making a loud, ear-splitting screeching that set the teeth of old Margaret on edge, for even she could hear it.

As the great engine drew up the fireman

leaped down, and fixed the hose, while the engineer, a big man, with big whiskers and a pair of bright blue eyes, looked about him and kept a sharp lookout for suspicious characters. This spot had been the scene of a hold-up ere now, and there were four Winchester repeating-rifles in the cab of the engine that the engineer and fireman were experts in using, and that they were not likely to leave idle when they scented danger.

The train was a long one, and near to the engine was an Express car, with its little window closely barred, and its inside covered with sheet iron, as the detective well knew. Two brakemen came to the front of the train, to watch the watering of the great iron horse, but were instantly ordered back to their positions on the train by the conductor, a short, fussy man, with a round face, and a habit of nagging, but who was known as one of the bravest men on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. One more brakeman in the caboose, at the rear, made up the crew, with the messenger and his assistant in the Express car.

"Hello! Who's that? Hands up!" suddenly yelled the engineer from the cab, as he pointed a Winchester at the water-tank.

"What's the matter, Frank?" cried the detective. "Don't you know me?"

"Silver Joe?"

"Of course," answered the detective, as he stepped out into the glare of the headlight and held out his hand.

"What in thunderation are you doing here?" asked the engineer, as he gave Joe's hand a hearty grip.

"Business," answered Silver Joe, with a laugh, releasing the engineer's hand and shaking that of the fussy conductor, who seemed equally glad to see the detective.

The three women came forth now, and the presence of Silver Joe was quite enough to assure the train crew that it was all right, even when Waga stalked forth and showed his strongly-marked Indian features under his old felt hat.

Silver Joe stepped up to the engine, with the conductor, and there was a whispered conference for a few moments. Then the conductor climbed upon the tender at the back and knocked at the little door that led to the interior of the Express car.

"Well?" shouted a gruff voice from within.

It matters not what the colloquy was that took place between the conductor and the owner of the gruff voice in the car, although it was evident that the gruff man was remonstrating strongly against some proposition of the conductor's.

At last the gruff man said:

"Well, it is your funeral. If anything goes wrong you must answer for it."

"I'll do it," assented the conductor, cheerfully.

Silver Joe beckoned to Cora, and in a few words explained the situation.

"We cannot reach Denver before this evening, a twelve hours' ride, and the only place in which you can be at all comfortable is the Express car. I am known to these gentlemen, and have arranged for you to ride in the car, with Mary Ellis and Margaret."

Cora did not question the detective, but obediently stepped into the car with his help, and in two minutes the three women were in the car, the door shut, and the detective, with Waga, in the cab of the engine.

"All aboard!" yelled the conductor, and the brakemen, having taken their places, and the engine being well supplied with water, the train pulled out.

For ten minutes it rumbled along through the mountains, winding in and out and casting a red glow over the rocks that rose on either hand as the fireman opened the furnace occasionally to pile on coal.

No one spoke in the cab, for the engineer and fireman had too much to do, the Indian was naturally silent, and Silver Joe was thinking deeply.

He knew that his task of restoring the Fiery Triangle treasure was not finished, and would not be until he had placed Cora with her aunt in Denver and stowed the treasure in a safe deposit vault in the name of Cora Leonard.

Half of the treasure, and the papers establishing the right of Cora to the Big Strike mine were in his pocket, and he felt the packages once in a while to make sure that they were safe.

The other half of the jewels were with Cora in the Express car.

"I don't know but that it would have been wise to put all the stuff in there," muttered the detective, as he looked ahead into the darkness, and thought how unpleasant it would be if the engine were to strike an obstruction on the track and roll into the canyon that now yawned on the left.

It was very dark—just before the dawn, and it seemed as if the engineer must be guiding his great machine by instinct. It is true that there were signals at intervals, but the track was in darkness, and it would have been easy for a rock to break from the cliffs overhead and roll down upon the track. Then, what could prevent the long train being piled up in the valley?

As the thoughts of the detective reached this point, there was a tremendous jar, as the engineer whistled for "Brakes!" and turned his lever back with a suddenness that told of something being wrong. The fireman and engineer were both active in stopping the train, and in an incredibly short space of time, the train was at a standstill, and the engineer and firemen had each seized a rifle.

The detective instinctively drew his revolver and peered ahead, but could not see anything.

"What do you make of it?" asked the engineer of the fireman, in a low voice.

Before the fireman could reply, a blow from behind laid him at the feet of his companions, and the engineer and Silver Joe each found themselves in the hands of two men, with masks covering their faces.

They had piled up an obstruction on the track, so that the train must be stopped, and had climbed on the tender and come through the windows of the cab.

The four strangers went about their work in a business-like way. They tied and then coolly lifted the fireman out of the cab, and laid him on the ground by the side of the cab, as he already began to show signs of returning consciousness. Then one of the men went to the lever and set the train going, but not at a high rate of speed.

The three other men searched the detective, but did not take anything save the package of papers and the Fiery Triangle treasure.

One of the men, a big fellow, whose hands were softer and whiter than those of the others, except one smaller man, whose fingers were long and whose hands generally were as delicate as a lady's, opened the papers hastily, and, as he glanced over them, uttered a chuckle of triumph.

That chuckle was enough. It told the detective that the big man was Walter Leonard, and then he had no difficulty in determining that the smaller man, with the soft white hands and long fingers, was Killer Newton, and that the other two men were Cy Ellis and Reddy, his bar-tender.

"So they are right after us," thought the detective.

"Where was Waga? The detective had not noticed him for some little time—not since they began the journey, in fact, when he saw that the Indian was leaning carelessly against the tender, taking up as little space as possible. He was certainly not in the cab now, and the detective wondered whether it was possible that he had been killed or captured by the superintendent and his gang before-hand.

On sped the train, with one of the masked men still at the lever, and the three others watching the captives.

"Do you know that we go through Devil's Canyon pretty soon, and that it is a pretty bad place if you don't know the road?" asked the engineer, at last.

"I do know the road," replied the man at the lever, gruffly.

"That's Jim Slider," muttered the engineer. "Now, I know the gang. If I only get to Denver again, I'll have no trouble in hunting down this crowd."

The engineer had been held up before, and he took the whole thing philosophically, although he was mad enough to punch the head of the fellow who was taking liberties with his engine, and to blow his brains out afterward.

"He always was a poor engineer," he muttered. "The company would not trust him with an engine toward the last, and I guess that's what sent him out on the road as a thief."

Walter Leonard gave the engineer a savage kick, accompanied with the admonition to "Shut up!"

If the detective had been in any doubt as to the identity of the superintendent, it was removed now, and he made up his mind that he would have no mercy on the man when once he got him in his power again.

Walter Leonard took care that the detective should not catch his eye, for he knew that if he did there would be little doubt of Silver Joe's having him under that mysterious influence whose terrible strength the superintendent knew too well.

Silver Joe had not been idle, however. He felt from the first that the rope on him was not very tight, and it was an easy thing for him to loosen it still more, so that by the time they approached Devil's Canyon the detective was ready to take a hand in any movement that might be thought expedient for getting out of the power of the fellows who had taken possession of the engine.

"Where's Cora?" hissed Walter Leonard, bending over the detective, after he had satisfied himself as to the character of the papers he had taken from his prisoner.

"None of your business," answered the detective, defiantly.

The superintendent opened his mouth to utter an oath, but at that moment something that he could not resist overcame him, and he could only look at the detective with a stony stare, that meant that he was no longer his own master.

Killer Newton and Cy Ellis were looking out straight ahead through the window on the left, while the man who was running the engine was equally occupied at the window on the right.

The detective had Walter Leonard to himself, and he smiled as he realized that the game was half won.

He hastily shook the loose ropes from his legs, and, as he arose quietly to his feet, his eyes met those of Waga, peering at him inquisitorily from the tender.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SILVER JOE MAKES TWO CONTRACTS.

As the detective withdrew his eyes from those of Leonard, the superintendent, by a mighty effort, obtained control of himself, and flew at the throat of the detective. At the same moment the two men, Newton and Ellis, turned, and joined in the melee.

The three men bore Silver Joe to the floor, when suddenly a fusilade of shots sounded in the air, and Killer Newton fell dead.

The onslaught was so sudden that Leonard and Ellis were taken completely by surprise. Before they could recover themselves Waga had seized Ellis, and the detective again had the superintendent in his power.

The Indian drew a knife, and with a few swift but dexterous slashes had cut the ropes on the engineer, and in less time than it takes to tell it, the engineer had dragged the masked man from the lever, thrown it back, and whistled for "Brakes!"

The ponderous train stopped, just in time. The Devil's Canyon was indeed a dangerous place, and a pile of rocks that had evidently fallen from above were on the track, enough to have sent the whole train into the abyss on the left, over three thousand feet deep.

"That's how much you know about railroading, Jim Slider," growled the en-

gineer. "No wonder you were fired from the road."

The man called Jim Slider pulled his mask from his face, and looked at the detective with a grin, showing the features of Reddy, the bartender for Ellis.

"I thought I knew you at Black Hawk, Mr. James Slider, although you did call yourself Reddy," said the detective, cheerfully. "Now I am afraid you will have to go back to Chicago and answer for one or two jobs of burglary that I have against you. In the mean time, throw up your hands!"

The last order came short and sharp, and Reddy, who had been stealthily fidgeting the butt of his revolver, and apparently considering whether it would be wise to draw, and make a fight for it, threw up his hands obediently, as he looked into the muzzle of one of the detective's six-shooters.

Silver Joe took away his weapons, and then turned to see what the engineer was about, for the train had stopped.

Reddy was on the watch for a chance to get away, and as the detective's attention was distracted for a moment, the whilom bartender leaped from the train.

Then sounded a horrible shriek. He had jumped from the wrong side.

"Well, it is just as good an end for him as being hanged in Chicago," observed the detective, carelessly, "and it will save the State of Illinois some money. That's a terrible fall, though, and I'm surprised that he did not know of that canyon, if he is a railroader, especially."

"I told him he was no good," grunted the engineer. "He never could remember the road, and he came mighty near wrecking his train right at this spot about a year ago."

Leonard and Cy were standing sulkily, with the ropes about them that had been used to tie the detective. The Indian was an expert in making knots, and he had fastened the hands of the two men behind them while the detective had been engaged with Reddy.

One of the brakemen had come forward, and at the request of the engineer had removed the rocks from the track, and again the train sped on, as the sun broke in golden glory over the peaks of the mountains, and ushered in one of those beautiful days that are so common in Colorado in the summer.

"I can't have these fellers in here," complained the engineer. "Shove 'em into one of the cars, can't you?"

He stopped the train, and in a few minutes two of the brakemen had locked Cy Ellis safely in a car that had been used for corn, and that smelt wholesome, even if there was not much comfort and no light.

The door of the Express car had been open all this time, and Cora and Margaret, each with a Winchester in her hand, while the Express messenger looked over their shoulders, similarly armed, were standing, evidently waiting for orders.

"Go inside again. We shall get to a breakfast station soon, and I will have something brought in to you," said the detective. "Things are coming our way, now."

"I know that, Joe. I have perfect confidence in you."

"Ugh!" grunted Waga, suddenly. "Golden Star is right. The Silver Chief is a great fighter, and he has the wisdom of the serpent. Waga knows."

The detective laughed, as he said: "You are very complimentary, Waga. I must try and get some fire-water for you when we reach Denver. By the way, Cora, take these things into the car with you. They will be safer there than with me. I came mighty near losing them just now in that interview with your precious uncle."

He crawled over the coal on the tender and put the chamois bag with the jewels and the package of papers into Cora's hands.

"You have the other bag all right, I suppose?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"Say, Joe, I'm blamed ef I ain't er

spoilin' fer er fight. Ain't thar' no chance uv er scrap?" put in Mary Ellis, as she balanced her Winchester in her hand, and looked at the lock to see that it was properly charged. "I wouldn't want ter do nothin' ter dad, but I'd liked ter hev' popped at that thar' Killer Newton, or Reddy, jist fer fun, like."

"They neither of them need to be popped at now," answered the detective, gravely. "Reddy is at the bottom of the canyon, and the body of Newton lies in one of the empty cars of this train. It is the natural end of both of them. They were lawless in life, and they could not expect to meet with anything less than violent deaths."

The girl did not reply. She felt that there was nothing to be said, and the door of the Express car was closed with a bang by the rather short-tempered Express messenger, bringing the interview to a close.

It is unnecessary to follow the journey to Denver. Suffice it to say that as the shadows were lengthening in the afternoon, the train rattled into the freight yard of the city, and the Express car was switched off to the regular place for its unloading.

Then the three women came out, and the detective saw them safely at the house of Cora's aunt, where, to her relief, Mary Ellis found that she was as welcome as Cora herself.

As for Waga and the detective, they had something else to attend to. Silver Joe reported at police headquarters, and, with extreme satisfaction, he saw Walter Leonard safely in a cell, to await proceedings to be instituted by the detective.

This task accomplished, Silver Joe went to bed, at a hotel, and enjoyed the first good night's rest he had had for a week, while the Indian, who would have been out of place in a first-class hotel, was accommodated with a cot at the police station in the hospital department, through the influence of Silver Joe.

For a week Silver Joe stayed in Denver, attending to the business that had taken him to Black Hawk. He made charges of swindling against Walter Leonard, and in due course he was held for trial and remanded to jail, for he had none to offer bail. The directors of the Big Strike mine, some of whom lived in Denver, were astonished when they discovered the real condition of things, and that Walter Leonard not only did not own any of the stock, but had been swindling them all in the management of the mine.

There was a meeting of directors one day at which they went deeply into the affairs of the mine, with the assistance of Silver Joe, whose knowledge of the mine and his persistent search for the treasure of the Fiery Triangle, which brought to light the papers of ownership of Cora Leonard, made him a valuable auxiliary at the meeting.

The end of the proceedings was that Silver Joe was formally offered the superintendency of the Big Strike mine, with the request that he go back at once and take charge.

Silver Joe thought for a moment and accepted. He had been in Denver then two weeks, and Waga had long since returned to Black Hawk.

The detective made his preparations to go to Black Hawk by the morning train the next day, and then he hurried to the house of Cora Leonard's aunt, for he had something to say to Cora that he could not hold back any longer.

He found her at home, and there was an interview of perhaps an hour between Cora and Joseph Hamilton, as he was called by the solemn directors of the Big Strike mine, although Cora still liked to call him Silver Joe. When the interview was ended, it was with the understanding that, at the end of the month, there was to be a wedding in Denver, and that Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hamilton were to occupy the handsome residence at Denver that now belonged to Cora Leonard, and in which she had lived for years with her uncle, Walter Leonard, who would never need a house again, save such as was provided by the State of Colorado, with

several hundred rascals to bear him company.

"Have you heard from Mary, since she went back?" asked Silver Joe, as he and Cora sat side by side, after coming to the satisfactory arrangement described.

"Yes. She has settled down at home, she tells me. She says that since her father, Cy, went back, with a warning from you to keep out of bad company in future, he is the very soul of kindness. He never refers to Dan Whitton, and he says that he does not understand how it was that Walter Leonard had such power over everybody. I don't think Cy Ellis is a very bad man. Do you, Joe?"

The detective smiled, as he answered:

"No. He was led away by Walter Leonard, I guess. That man was a dangerous gentleman, I can tell you, and I don't understand how he managed to hide his real character from you so thoroughly."

"Well, he was always kind," answered the girl, musingly. "And then, it would not have been wise for him to be unkind to me when he knew that he was taking so much that belonged to me, would it?"

"Well, I am glad that Cy Ellis is behaving himself. I suppose I shall see him and Mary to-morrow. Then I will have to look after that fellow, Dick Cole."

"Cold Deck?"

"Yes. We left him in that cave, near Waga's house, and Waga found him still there when he went back from Denver the next day, after coming with us. He had left some bread and water in the cave, so Cold Deck wouldn't starve. But I should like to know what has become of him."

"Perhaps he has got away," suggested Cora.

"Not unless he escaped before Waga got back. And I do not suppose he did. I am sure that Indian would never let him get out when once he was back. I may find him there, waiting for me."

"For two long weeks."

"It would be all the same to Waga if it were two years. I know him. He is like most Indians, utterly apathetic in appearance, but full of determination, and I know that he is devoted to me."

"Well, what about supper?" suddenly broke in old Margaret's voice, as she came into the parlor, smiling, for she liked Silver Joe, and she was particularly pleased to think that Cora was to become Mrs. Hamilton. She had not been told the news, but, as she said to herself, she had been called "the wise woman" by the Indian, and she could see a thing or two—particularly when it was so plain as in this case.

When Silver Joe took his place in a passenger train on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad the next morning, he wore a rose in his buttonhole, and the last thing he saw as the train rolled out of the station was Cora Leonard, with a bunch of the same kind of roses in her corsage, waving a good-by to him, while old Margaret stood by her side, smiling like a good-natured old fairy god-mother.

CHAPTER XXIX. COLD DECK AGAIN.

It was dark when Silver Joe walked up the canyon at Black Hawk toward Waga's cabin and uttered the old familiar wolf's-cry. The answer came at once, and in a few minutes the detective stood in Waga's cabin and looked about him.

The Indian didn't speak any words of greeting, but he took out two pipes, filled one and lighted it, and handed it to Silver Joe, with his usual gravity, and then lighted one for himself.

Joe knew the Indian's ways, so he smoked in silence, until, by the time his pipe had burned out, Waga had produced a supper of coffee and ham, as usual, and motioned to his white brother to partake.

The meal was over before Silver Joe asked him, quietly:

"Where is Cold Deck?"

"Where you left him," answered Waga, coolly. "Waga's hand is his white brother's, and he has done what the

Silver Chief left for him. The way is near to the cave. Come."

He arose from his stool, and led Silver Joe into the darkness out of the doorway at which the door had been kicked down before they left for Denver, but which had been repaired in a rude way by Waga himself since his return.

They reached the spot near the cave, where, it will be remembered, there was a hole big enough to drop a man through, and Waga removed the stone and pointed to the dark hole.

Silver Joe took out his always-useful cigar-lighter, and by its light looked into the interior of the cave.

Cold Deck was lying on the floor immediately beneath him, fast asleep, and apparently enjoying his rest as much as if he had been in a luxuriously appointed bedroom, without a care upon his mind.

"He has grit," muttered Silver Joe. Then he cried in a loud tone, that caused the sleeper to awake with a start:

"Hello, Cold Deck!"

Cold Deck looked up at the face that showed so plainly by the glare of the cigar-lighter in the opening, and inquired, in a surly voice: "What do you want?"

"Don't get mad, Cold Deck," answered the detective, pleasantly. "Things have kind of turned against you, and you'll make nothing by being disagreeable. I'm going to take you back to Denver, I think, to answer to several charges I have against you. You have been swindling people by pretending to be me, and I'm afraid that when once we get you into State prison you will never get out till you die!"

"I shall never go into State prison. Mark that!"

With these words Cold Deck deliberately laid himself down in a corner of his cave and shut his eyes.

"Cold Deck, I want to speak to you."

No answer.

"It may be to your advantage."

No answer.

"Well, if you won't talk, I'll leave you till the morning. Then I'll make you talk," continued the detective, but he got no answer from the sulky sport below.

The stone was placed over the hole, and the cave was thrown into utter darkness again.

Then occurred a peculiar thing. Cold Deck leaped to his feet, full of activity, and, searching in a corner of his cave, found a wax candle, fixed on a small slab of wood, with three nails. It was just such a primitive candlestick as may be found in any miner's cabin in the West, where it is not often possible to get lamps, and where gas is, of course, unknown. A match came from his pocket, and then he had plenty of light in his cave to see his way about.

"I am glad you have come back now, Silver Joe," muttered Cold Deck, vindictively. "I have a score to settle with you, and I did not want the trouble of going to Denver for it. I want to get to Sacramento as soon as possible."

He felt in all his pockets, and brought out what possessions he had. There was a purse well filled with gold pieces, and a pocketbook containing some hundred-dollar bills. He was well supplied with money. He had a small penknife, a watch and chain, some matches, some cigars and a lead pencil.

"If I only had a gun I shouldn't care. That cursed Indian took my guns, and I suppose he has them somewhere in his cabin. Never mind. I'll get them."

While talking thus to himself, Cold Deck replaced his property in his pockets, except his knife, and went to the edge of the cave that looked down into the chasm.

"One more cut will do it, I think," he muttered, as he dug at the rock below the ledge, and scooped at a hole he had already made. "It might bear me as it is, perhaps, but I don't want to take too many chances."

He scooped away, and at last, after an hour's work—for the rock was hard and his knife small—he was satisfied.

"Queer that he should have come back on this particular night. Well, the devil

always takes care of his own, and I must be under the special protection of His Infernal Highness. Now, good-by to the cave! I'll leave the candle burning. It will give me light to get out, and I'm not likely to want it again."

Cold Deck let himself down, with his face to the cave, and put his right foot firmly into the hole that he had made. Then, with a tremendous exertion, he threw himself sideways into space.

It was an awful risk, as he knew, in spite of his remark that he would not take chances, for he had studied his ground well during the past fortnight, and could not see how he was to miss it, if he jumped properly.

"Anyhow, if I do," he muttered, many times, "it is better than staying here, to be carted off to Denver, and clapped in State prison for the rest of my life. Any fate but that!"

When he threw himself off he had no time to think before he felt himself lying flat on the ledge a little below the cave, that he had often looked at as a certain step to the firm, rocky path that would lead him anywhere he wanted to go.

"Safe!" he muttered, as he climbed from the ledge to the path.

Then the reaction came, and he lay at full length, panting, as he tried to realize that he was free again, to pursue his revenge upon Silver Joe. For so vindictive was his feeling against the Denver detective that he actually thought of nothing else, as the object to be obtained by his freedom.

In ten minutes he felt himself strong enough for anything that might befall him, and walked gently and not too fast toward the cabin of the Indian, where he expected to find Silver Joe.

"Weapons, first of all," he muttered, as he reached the door and listened.

All was quiet within; then Cold Deck, with his penknife, soon shot back the inside bolt, and, with absolutely no noise, slipped into the cabin and threw himself flat upon the floor.

The cabin was in darkness, save for a slight glow from the dying embers in the primitive stove, and it took Cold Deck a few moments to distinguish the detective and Waga.

The Indian lay almost across the doorway, and Cold Deck saw that it was by the merest good luck he had not tumbled over him, when there would have been a struggle, and most likely the Indian and the detective would have overpowered him, because he had no weapons.

Cold Deck rose carefully to his feet, and by the side of Silver Joe saw a pistol lying, which he recognized as one of his own, and which had apparently been taken from a shelf where he could see other weapons.

Cold Deck could not restrain the temptation to pick up the pistol, and had it in his hand, and pointed straight at the head of the sleeping detective, in a flash.

"How easily I could fix him," he thought. "No; it wouldn't do. I should wake up that redskin, and there would be too much danger for me. I'll put it off for an hour or two."

He was moving cautiously toward the door, when Waga, happening to move in his sleep, threw his leg right across Cold Deck's path.

Cold Deck's foot was caught. He tripped and fell sprawling upon Silver Joe!

Waga and the detective were upon their feet in an instant, as Cold Deck, with an execration, pointed his pistol at the detective's head and pulled the trigger. The hammer snapped; there was no report!

"Curse it!" yelled Cold Deck, as he rapidly pulled the trigger five more times, with a little harmless snap each time.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Denver detective. "I don't leave loaded guns lying around loose, Dick. You fooled yourself that time!"

The detective was surprised to see Cold Deck free, but he could not help enjoying the joke on him, notwithstanding.

"Curse you! I'll get you yet!" howled Cold Deck.

He whirled the heavy pistol around his head to throw it into the face of the detective.

tive, but Waga caught his wrist and the infuriated man was a prisoner again.

He struggled with the Indian, but the redskin had a world of strength in his wiry muscles, and he handled Cold Deck as if he had been a child, in spite of the fact that the gambler was really an athlete in strength.

"Now you have me, what are you going to do with me?" demanded Cold Deck, as he glared at Silver Joe defiantly.

"I'm going to take you to Denver, and hand you over to the authorities," answered Joe Hamilton, quietly.

"All right. I suppose I will have to go."

"Waga, you will have to sit up and watch this man. I would not trust him without being watched now," said the detective.

The Indian did not answer in words, but drew a Winchester from the corner of the cabin, and, pointing it straight at Cold Deck, indicated a spot at which he was to stand.

The gambler stepped obediently to the spot, and throwing his silk hat, which he had kept upon his head through all his adventures, into Waga's face, he snatched up another Winchester and ran out of the house. But as he passed through the door the gun caught against the doorease and he dropped it on the floor.

There was no time to pick it up, so he ran out, unarmed, but able to run all the faster for it.

"Got away again, eh?" observed the detective.

"Find him in the morning," assured the Indian, as he bolted the door and calmly laid himself down to sleep, apparently rather pleased that he was not obliged to sit up and watch Cold Deck.

Silver Joe recognized the wisdom of the Indian's plan—although he would rather have known that Cold Deck was safe—and lay down in his corner, with his hand on the butt of a revolver, and went fast asleep.

The day had broken when the two men awoke, and the detective sallied forth to look for Cold Deck.

He had not proceeded a hundred yards down the ravine when he found the gambler, partly hidden behind a huge rock and fast asleep!

CHAPTER XXX.

COLD DECK'S LAST SHOT.

Silver Joe could hardly believe his eyes, but he wasted no time. Presenting his pistol full at Cold Deck's head, he stirred him up with his foot.

Still half asleep, the gambler sprang to his feet, looking into the muzzle of the detective's pistol.

"Where am I?" he exclaimed, in a dazed way. "I thought I was two or three miles away from here."

"That's how you get fooled among these winding paths, Cold Deck. You are not the first man who has walked around all night, and found himself at the place from which he started.

Cold Deck, taking little notice of the words, was thinking of how to overcome his foe, but could see no way that would not take his own life at the same time.

That counted little with him now, however. In spite of the threatening pistol he flew at Silver Joe's throat as the weapon went off with a loud report.

Cold Deck was not hit. He seized the weapon and tried to turn the muzzle toward the detective. He was no match for Joe Hamilton in physical strength, and the pistol was soon turned so that it pointed direct upon the gambler's breast.

"Shoot! Curse you!" yelled Cold Deck. "Shoot! You have the drop on me, and I'll kill you if I ever get a chance."

For a second Joe hesitated. Then he threw the other from him violently.

"No," he said. "I am not a murderer. You shall have a chance for your life!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I will kill you in a straight fight or not at all. If you can kill me, that is your chance. What do you say?"

"I'll take the chance," answered the double, surlily. "I suppose some string is tied to this generous offer of yours, but it can't be any worse for me. And if I have

to go over the river I'd like to take you with me."

"Good-natured of you, I am sure," answered Silver Joe, with imperturbable good humor. "Waga, take him to the cabin and let us have some breakfast."

It was a strange group that sat down to breakfast in the cabin half an hour later. The spotter from Denver had made the coffee and cooked the ham, for the Indian had been engaged in watching the dangerous and desperate prisoner.

Cold Deck took the viands mechanically, knowing it would be wise to keep up his strength for what he had to go through. He did not share any sentiment about not being treacherous to his host. He would have killed him there at the table if he could.

The spot which Joe Hamilton chose for the duel was the top of the mountain, near the deep chasm over which Cold Deck had leaped his horse, and where poor Thundercloud had met his death.

Silver Joe took his pistol, in which there were two shots. Another weapon, also with two cartridges, was handed to Cold Deck.

They were to stand twenty paces apart and fire as soon as the Indian should raise his hand.

Cold Deck was placed with his back to the rising sun, having won the toss for positions, and Joe Hamilton was walking quietly to his own position, when Cold Deck fired rapidly his two shots at the retreating form of his antagonist.

The Indian was watching for treachery, and knocked up the would-be assassin's hand, so that the shots sped high up over Joe's head.

Cold Deck scowled as he saw that his attempt at murder had failed.

"Blaze away!" he yelled. "I've played my game and lost. You hold the trumps now, and I've nothing more to expect."

"That's true, Dick. I don't see what I can do except to shoot you dead," answered the detective.

He pointed his pistol carefully at Cold Deck, at twenty paces, at which distance he was of course, an absolute dead shot, and fired over Cold Deck's head!

"One more chance for you, Cold Deck," he said, lightly. "Waga, put a cartridge in his pistol. We shall be even then."

Waga evidently did not like this incomprehensible generosity, but did as commanded, and once more Cold Deck had a chance to kill his captor and enemy if he could fire first.

The gambler looked about him as he stood there, bareheaded, for he had left his silk hat in the cabin, and then an idea struck him.

"Silver Joe," he called.

"Well?"

"Come here. I want to leave a message for my folks in case I should fall, as I probably shall. Will you take it for me?"

For answer, Joe came forward, his pistol hanging at his side. Like a flash Cold Deck, who had been holding his revolver pointed at the detective all through the colloquy, let drive.

The bullet went through Silver Joe's high silk hat, but at the same instant a bullet from Waga's pistol crashed through the brain of the treacherous scoundrel.

"He was a thankless fellow," said the Silver Sport, looking down at the lifeless form of his double, "and yet I am glad I did not kill him. I am to be married this week, and should not like to give Cora a hand which had just killed a man, no matter how much he might deserve it."

Waga had no such compunction, and was heartily glad that this troublesome desperado was out of the way. He buried the body during the day, and planted a little piece of wood in the earth to mark the spot. If Waga had killed Cold Deck a few years before, doubtless there would have been a scalp hanging at the Indian's belt, but the redskin had become civilized, as he frequently boasted, and some of the ways of his people he had dropped forever.

There was nothing more to stay up in the mountains for, so Silver Joe made his way down to Cy Ellis's saloon, where he found things quiet, for most of the miners were at work, and little was to be done in

the way of business at Cy's place when the mines were busy.

Cy Ellis was glad to see the Denver detective, evidently, for he shook hands with him effusively, and urged him to take a friendly drink.

"I know what you like," he added, with a smile, and knowing wink of his one eye.

He poured out some seltzer water, and as the detective raised it to his lips Cy remarked:

"There wuz lively times in this hyar saloon ther last time ez yer drank seltzer in it. Wuzn't that?"

"Yes; but they are all over now."

"Maybe. But, I tell yer, when ther boys come in hyar with a lot uv gold-dust, yer never know what they will do. They likes ter hev' er little fun once in er while, an' then some one's liable ter git hurt, and that's mebbe comes er lynchin' er something."

"What air yer gassing erbout, dad?" broke in a feminine voice, and Mary Ellis burst into the room, and, throwing her arms around Silver Joe's neck, gave him a wram, sisterly kiss.

Silver Joe was a man of the world, so didn't blush, but was rather pleased at this friendly greeting on the part of this rude but true friend of Cora Leonard's.

The tale is told. Silver Joe, or Mr. Joseph Hamilton, as he was known at Black Hawk, has taken possession of the superintendent's house, with his bride, who was Miss Cora Leonard, and who, as Mrs. Joseph Hamilton, retains all the popularity which she enjoyed in Black Hawk as Miss Leonard. It is possible that many of the miners who work in Black Hawk have a pretty good inkling of all the events that led up to the arrest of Walter Leonard and his retirement to the penitentiary, but they never speak of it. Mr. Hamilton is not the man to encourage discussion of the subject, and they all know that, while he is pleasant with his men, no one can be sterner, when occasion requires, than the Silver Sport of the Boulevard.

THE END.

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